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MRS. T. C. HOYT
SNOWFLAKE, ARIZONA

Mar 31, 1924

Dear Miss Gerry:- I am mailing you to-day an autographed copy of Mr Hoyt's book Rimrock Thanking you for your note of interest also for your order, and trust that the book will repay you in the reading of it.

Mr Hoyt has lost the check you send and I am going to trouble to look thru your canceled checks for the next month or two to see if it is cashed - he had not endorsed it

MRS. T. C. HOYT
SNOWFLAKE, ARIZONA

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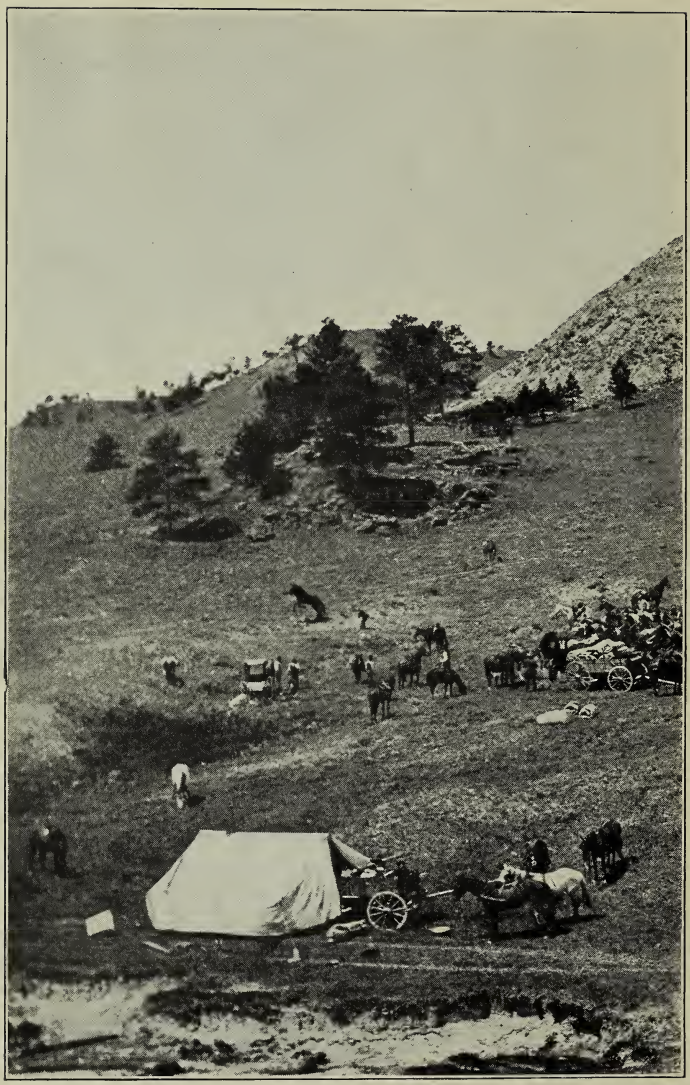
I am yours sincerely
Lammie T. Hoyt

RIMROCK

A STORY OF THE WEST



"BREAKING CAMP"

RIMROCK

A STORY OF THE WEST

BY

T. C. HOYT

BOSTON
THE FOUR SEAS COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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UPB

TO
MY BROTHERS
JOSIAH M. HOYT
AND EDWARD LAMB, WHO
LIVED AND SERVED AMID THE
STRESS OF THE TIMES AND EVENTS
DEPICTED, THIS BOOK IS
RESPECTFULLY AND
AFFECTIONATELY
INSCRIBED

FOREWORD

TIME was when the West belonged to the Indians, later to be joined by the explorer, the trapper, the prospector, the miner, and, finally the cattle-man, about in the order named. The coming of each of these advance agents of civilization marked an epoch and brought about events which, as they occurred, seemed so commonplace, so casually incidental to those observing them or participating in them, that many of the important facts that should make up the real history of the west were not, and, unfortunately never will be, actually or accurately chronicled.

It is both fortunate and unfortunate that much of the fiction, and what has too largely taken the place of the actual history, of the real West, has come from the pens of those who arrived a decade or two after the events they have sought to record. It is unfortunate in the often apparent inaccuracies and wrong inferences that inevitably result from attempts to record facts upon the basis of second-hand information. It is fortunate in that the interest and the significance of events not at all appreciated by those directly participating in them was appreciated by those who came later and with the added opportunity of observing results.

At first the Indian could not see how his existence was possible if he were called upon to share his patrimony with the pale-face. The explorer excited curiosity and occasional resentment, the miner less of curiosity and more resentment, while the trapper's welcome had its basis in the trade relations that resulted. In the coming of the cattle-man, however, there was not the element of curiosity nor the trade relations upon which to base the amicable relationship that existed between the redman and the explorer, trapper, and miner. To the Indian the cattle-man was

plainly a menace to the unhampered enjoyment of age-old freedom and use of the forests, the streams, and the plains. Added to the opposition of the Indians with which the pioneer cowman had to contend were the disadvantages of uncertain climate, the forced isolation, the long distance to market or to supplies, and the thousand-and-one other drawbacks all tending to develop the aggressiveness, the firmness of purpose, and the stern resistance to opposition, and to some extent the narrowness of view, out of which came conflicts and problems the existence of and dealings with which constitute, when rightly portrayed, some of the most stirring and virile chapters of our history.

Under the old conditions the cattle business of necessity was only profitable on a large scale and the scope of territory was necessarily extensive in order to include the variety of range required to provide forage for all seasons of the year; the terms Spring range, Fall range, and Winter range being applied to different sections classified according to altitude or other factors that influenced climatic conditions and character and amount of forage. In those sections where the water was scarce the utilization of the available supply was the chief factor in the control of large areas of range. Add to all this the deep-seated and long established conviction that this range land was fit for no other purpose and only utilizable upon a large scale, and you have the basis for some sort of conception of the elements that fixed the views and the motives and determined the course and conduct of the old time "cattle barons" in their resistance of the—to them—unwarranted encroachments of the would-be settler—the "nester," so-called.

The introduction, or application, of irrigation in the agricultural development of arid lands of the west by the Mormons finally became the great deciding factor and the potent economic influence that broke up vast range areas into smaller units and brought about the establishment of farming, ranching, and the feeding

of some stock as distinguished from the old year-long range regime. It also introduced or brought about the existence of economic, social, and governmental problems the consideration and efforts at solution of which have invited the attention of the ablest men of the nation. Like all great problems these have served to develop types of manhood,—yes, a type of citizenship that will leave its impress upon the policies and the achievements of the age.

Each generation, each epoch, has its own problems and creates others for the men and the women, the statesmen and the philosophers, that follow after. So, with the mantle of charity for the faults and the foibles of some, let us find enjoyment and profit in contemplation of the character and achievements of the many, and profit by the study of the conditions that influenced the aims and the actions of all.

T. C. H.

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RIMROCK

A STORY OF THE WEST

RIMROCK

CHAPTER I

A MAN WITH A PURPOSE

"YES, I guess that's it. You sighted it first, Monty, old boy. Have you been here before, or can you smell the water that distance, or did you just simply see it first?"

"Monty" was a medium-sized gray saddle horse of the type common to the range sections of the southwest, and his rider had been led to these queries by the fact that the horse, which for the past several hours had steadily shuffled his way along the lonely, dust-strewn road apparently oblivious of everything in the world except the accumulation of dust in his nostrils, had suddenly lifted his head, flipped his ears forward, and looked diagonally to the right. Across the stretch of sage-covered, flat, and low-rolling foot hills the base of the mountain was cut by an abrupt, rocky canyon at the mouth of which a few green trees were visible, evidencing the presence of water.

Lewis Ames had been told that, riding straight down the fan-shaped valley southward, he would eventually be able to see, off to his right, the mouth of the canyon in which was situated the headquarter's ranch of the "Bar-T" outfit. Passing other canyons similar in character to the one just sighted he was to identify this particular one by "the green spot at its mouth." When the trail brought him into the valley some twenty miles to the north he had begun to look for the canyon "with the green at the mouth." The looking, becoming monotonous finally, had been forgotten, or only subconsciously indulged, as his mind became occupied with another problem—the great problem of his life and the one this day's lonely ride was to play a part in solving.

The thirsty, jaded horse licked his dusty lips in anticipation of the cooling drink he seemed to know awaited him at yonder oasis in this desert waste of sand and gravel and sage; for the valley down which he had jogged the greater portion of the day was fast widening into a great open scope of cactus-dotted black sage and greasewood, interspersed with open patches of white sage. New as he was to the country and to the cattle business as here conducted, Ames soon evolved the idea that he was riding in what must be the winter range section of the great ranch of which he had heard. The summer range he also rightly concluded was back of the headquarters ranch in the canyons and the higher reaches of the mountains to the west. Straight ahead of him through most of the day he had seen the winding zigzag course, and here and there the face of the upper cliffs of that mighty gorge, the Grand Cañon of the Colorado, which, it was plain to see, marked the southern and eastern limits of this vast and splendid range area. To the left and back of him loomed the high red granite wall of Echo Reef, plainly forming the northeastern leg of the great triangle the third side of which was the great plateau that bounded the valley on the west and marked the dividing line between the mountain summer range and this vast triangle of splendid winter range of which he was in the very midst. What he did not include in his conclusions was that the canyons and the lower slopes of the mountains and the rolling foothills nestling against them constituted the first-class "Spring and Fall range," adding materially to the value and ideality of this great ranch. Admitting his disqualification as a judge in the matter, Ames nevertheless ventured to estimate that even with the scarcity of water, the light snows, and sometimes copious rains of the winter season, of which he had heard, this range must comfortably support many thousands of head of cattle. Reared in a section of the country where farming was the chief industry,

and his experience along that line supplemented by some education in engineering, he studied the topography of the country for possibilities of storage of water, recognizing that most of the soil was certainly adapted to the production of crops by some irrigation. It was plain that the source of supply must be the mountain to the west, which he had noticed gradually increased in elevation toward the south and became heavily timbered. From its elevation and general character Ames thought it ought to contain some basins where water could be stored.

By this time he had reached the corner of a pasture fence, and the road turned abruptly west. Topping a small rise he could see the ranch buildings and corrals. Coming from the south was a band of horses driven by a couple of cow-boys. No other signs of life were visible about the place. Ames had been assured that here he would find the foreman of the ranch and, having some idea of the character of the man, he began to go over in his mind the procedure he would follow in order to carry out his purpose.

CHAPTER II

AT "BAR-T" HEADQUARTERS

"LOOK whut's here."

The speaker, Jim Ingle, one of the regular ranch hands, had just closed the big corral gate and was turning to lead his horse to the saddle shed when he noticed Ames approaching. José, his companion, looked in the direction of Ames and made some exclamation in Spanish, and then added: "No cow-puncher."

"Evidently not, from his looks and the way he rides," commented Ingle, it being evident that the newcomer's not being a cow-puncher added interest, if not mystery, to the fact of his coming. Both men stood staring as Ames rode up.

"Some hoss," commented the Mexican just as Ames came within hearing distance.

"How do you do, gentlemen?" said Ames, reining his horse close to the watering trough.

"Howdy," said Ingle, while the Mexican only grunted and, ignoring the man, began to study the horse carefully.

"This is Bar-T headquarters, is it not?"

"Yep," said the puncher.

"The foreman about?"

"In the house," and the cow-boy motioned with his quirt toward the rock house in a little clump of trees up the slope, and started to lead his horse toward the shed beyond the house, evidently taking the inquiry for the foreman as terminating the interview so far as he was concerned.

Ames followed along to where the ranch hands turned through a gate toward the outbuildings. Then, leaving his horse, he went to the house. As he approached the door opened and three men came out on the porch that ran part way along the front of the

building. Hesitating a moment in the expectation that one or the other might offer some sort of a salutation Ames took in the appearance of the trio and in that brief moment settled to a conclusion that the task he had set out to accomplish was a man-sized job. The man nearest was large of stature with a tendency to heaviness, especially about the neck and body. The man next to him was nearly as tall but not so heavy, light complexioned with cold, steely eyes and a general attitude of great force and decision. The third man was so dark and swarthy that at first Ames took him to be a Mexican, but other features, notwithstanding his swarthiness, marked him as probably American. His eyes were full but cold, and his whole countenance seemed framed in a sort of perpetual leer.

"I was looking for the foreman,—Mr. Jackson, I think," said Ames when he had waited as long as politeness seemed to warrant. The big man made a motion with his closed hand and extended thumb toward the man next to him, but without saying a word. The light-complexioned man made one step forward as though he had in some way been challenged, and said in two sharp, short syllables: "I'm him."

"I was at Kanab a few days ago when the mail carrier brought word that you wanted a man or two, and—"

"Kin yu ride?" broke in the foreman.

"I came here on horseback," Ames rejoined, "though I do not pretend to be much at it. I think, however, that—"

"Rope?" again broke in the foreman, while the others stood in an attitude of suspicious curiosity.

"No, I couldn't make any pretensions at that, I'm afraid," answered Ames smiling. "I—"

"Where you from?"

It was the big man breaking silence for the first time.

Ames had no misgivings as to what the question implied and shaped his answer accordingly.

"From Kanab, just now, but only recently from the East, as it would be considered here. From Illinois."

"Takin' up any land?" This again from the big man.

"No, sir."

The big man looked him straight in the eye as though doubtful of the truthfulness of the answer and after a two minute pause and scrutiny, said: "Aimin' to?"

The question was shot out like an aggressive lawyer cross-examining a reluctant witness whom he expects to corner. Ames succeeded in curbing the desire to tell the questioner it was none of his business and, steadying himself with the thought of the purpose of his coming, answered composedly and with manifest frankness born of the truth of the assertion.

"No, sir, I have no such intention, I'm simply looking for work."

"Anybody with yuh?"

"I—no, I'm alone—"

"What was yu goin' to say?"

This last hastily and suspiciously as though to spring a trap.

"I was going to say," and the words were prompt and candid, "that I had a friend who might come if desired, but," smilingly, "I happened to think that one of our—of my kind, a raw recruit, was about enough."

The big man, at first plainly vexed at not finding his man "in a corner," nor showing any signs of confusion, probably to cover his own confusion and let himself out, also smiled and seemed to indicate that he was through and the matter was again up to the foreman.

"J'know of anybuddy else comin?" was the foreman's next query.

Quickly catching the significance of the question but also quite sure of his ground in that respect, Ames suppressed the inclination to smile again.

"No," he said placidly, and then with a smile, "Had there been competition for the place I—I am not sure

I should have come. Assuming, however, that there was demand for more than one, I made some inquiries in the hope of finding company for the trip, but it seemed that no one else was coming so I tackled it alone. I hoped that being the only applicant increased my chances of getting a place in spite of the handicap of my inexperience."

"Have tu take him, I guess," said the big man in an undertone to the foreman.

Awkwardly, brutally crude as the remark was, Ames suppressed the inclination to tell this big fat hulk that he did *not* "have to take him," but on second thought was not so sure but what they might really *have to take him,* but possibly not in the way of their choosing, a thought which was potent in helping him to curb his natural resentment and answer mildly that he thought he might be able to make up for his deficiency as a real cowboy by work he could do along other lines.

"That your horse?" was the foreman's next question.

"It is; yes, sir."

"Don't need him a-tall," said the steely eyed one. "Got plenty uv our own. Don't hire no horses."

"That's all right, Mr. Foreman, perhaps there's a pasture—or I might send him back by the mail—"

"Where to," fairly snapped the foreman in a tone and manner as though he expected in the answer the confirmation of a suspicion. Again Ames caught the significance of the foreman's manner and question, recalling the fact that the mail carrier's message had been that no man with any local interest in either cattle or ranches was wanted.

"I thought, perhaps, that if my horse was not needed, I might be able to turn him in some pasture, or in case that were unsatisfactory, I would send him back to town and have him cared for by some one there."

"Any rel'tives there?"

The foreman seemed less sure he had a clue to some sort of information for which he was probing.

"No, sir."

"Put yer saddle in that shed un yer horse in there," and the foreman pointed to a gate leading to a fenced area back of the ranch and up on the side of the mountain.

CHAPTER III

"THEY'S SOME MEN YOU KIN GIT TO DO ANYTHING"

THE cowboy first addressed approached, and as none of the men on the porch offered to introduce Ames, he smilingly offered to show Ames where to put his saddle and horse. "Be you goin' tu work here?"

"Do the best I can at it," Ames answered, grateful for one individual on the place who seemed friendly disposed.

When the saddle was in place and the horse turned into the pasture the cowboy led the way to the bunk house. Ames with an amused smile remarked that if it was the custum to use any names on the ranch his was "Ames:—Lewis Ames."

The cowboy smilingly held out his hand and said that while some sort of handle was usually handy, nick names were as good as any except on pay checks.

"On the paper," he stated further, "I'm James E. Ingle, but my everyday name is Ingy, or Jim."

"I'm very glad to know you, Mr. Ingle," Ames returned. "Considering my lack of experience and knowledge of the country I've no doubt that I'll get what I'm entitled to, the designation of 'Tenderfoot.' "

As soon as Lewis Ames had resolved to try to obtain work on the Bar-T ranch as part of the plan of action he had mapped out for himself, he knew he must make up his mind to take just what came as the best way to establish himself in the confidence of his associates. Hence he deemed it wise to make the best of the manifest friendliness of his new acquaintance to tactfully get as much information as possible about the ranch personnel, the character of the work, and the methods of its accomplishment. For nearly an hour they sat in the bunk house, Ames' attitude of interest and earnest inquiry stimulating Ingle, and, with the

charity that came of his being able to put himself in Ames' place, the cowboy made the conversation most profitable.

The ranch, in the opinion of this cowboy, was nearly ideal; and he made clear the fact that the chief owner, Mr. Jacob Frye, was fully appreciative of that fact. Indeed, it seemed that in the opinion of Ingle Mr. Frye's chief, if not only, virtue was that he did appreciate the ranch, that he intended to keep it and see there were no encroachments by other cattlemen, sheepmen, or nesters. Furthermore, this cowboy was something of a psychologist in his crude way; his comments on the Ranch management, or his shrewd innuendoes, which Ames was too wise to accept literally, were nevertheless of great value to him, especially as they began to be verified by his own observations and actual associations. While Ingle clearly depicted the character of the owner of the ranch and his present manager and endorsed the policy of acquiring and keeping control of the range, it was quite clear that he was not greatly impressed with their characters in general nor with some of the methods to which they resorted in maintaining that policy. That he was not alone in this view of things, he intimated by reference to the fact that with the present ownership and management the personnel had been much changed, partly by voluntary action of some of the men and partly by the dismissal of others. While Ingle did not say it in so many words, the inference was plain that these changes had been made for the purpose of eliminating all of the men who, either by relationship, associations, or property interest, would be in any way concerned with the welfare of the local people, meaning those who had previously, as a community or as individuals, used some portions of the range Mr. Frye was now trying to monopolize.

"This range," Ingle explained, "used to be the range for cattle owned by twenty or thirty individual owners, besides a company or two. A man named Miller used

to be the high-muck-a-muck o' the comp'ny that owned Bar-T, and the foreman, named Webb, wuz some fine ol' boy and well liked by all the boys. It wuz 'live an' let live' with him, an' he never made no bones about ever'-buddy's cattle bein' on the range if they on'y done their part of the ridin' and helped keep up improvements. One ol' guy who owned a bunch o' stock in the comp'ny got the idear that raisin' steers wuzen't makin' money fast 'nuf so he ups an' blows the comp'ny fer a lot o' debts he'd piled up an' got in bad an' the whole thing had to be sold, an' that's how Mr. Frye an' this outfit got in here. Mr. Webb wanted a bunch o' the local fellers to throw in an' buy the Old Comp'ny's stock and range int'rest but he couldn't git 'em together on the proposition. I bet they's more'n one of 'em that's wishin' they'd a stood by Webb an' his proposition."

While Ames was already partially aware of the prevailing policy of the company he had been considerably enlightened as to its past history. Because all this information might be useful to him he had maintained a well balanced attitude of mild curiosity and casual interest to stimulate the cowboy's inclination to talk and yet not arouse any suspicion that the history or policy of the company was any concern to him. He did not want to appear inquisitive, but was framing another question in some casual form to get the cowboy's view as to just the extent the company, under Frye's management, had gone in their plans to secure control of the great area of range. The very appearance and manner of Mr. Frye and the foreman, Jackson, had given Ames the impression that there was very likely no limit to the ends to which they would go nor the means they would employ to attain their object. The question Ames had intended to ask was to take a measure in this respect and he knew he must be cautious both in manner and wording. Plainly both Mr. Frye and his foreman had viewed his coming with suspicion. They certainly did not want

anyone in their employ who had any motive in criticising their policy or taking issue with their methods.

"It must require some effort and—and—well, thoroughness—to get and keep control of the range the company occupies, for I've no doubt there are some who would like to get in here, and very likely some have tried."

"All depends on how you go at it—" Ingle stopped, evidently perplexed as to just what he ought to say. He wanted to be friendly and he wanted to impress his new friend with his knowledge of conditions, but for the first time he manifested by his demeanor what he had not lived up to in his words, namely, that the rule of the ranch was, in effect: "Talk will not get you anywhere." He shrugged his shoulders, hesitated a moment, and with the significance that he intended, added: "They's some men yu can git to do anything."

It was clear to Ames that he had gone far enough for one sitting and he turned the conversation to other, but to him, profitable channels.

"I haven't much of an idea what will be expected of me," he said. "Perhaps you could let me know something of the work that one of my lack of experience might be expected to do. I'm sure I'd appreciate your suggestions."

"Well," and the cowboy assumed an air of seriousness, "the man on a cow ranch who can't ride is not much. I'd advise yu to brush up on that. Until yu kin do purty well at that you're li'ble to hev to drive the chuck-wagon when we're in country where we kin use it. When we're in the 'roughs' y'll hev tu tend the packs and flunky 'round camp, and work on corrals, and day herd—an'—"

"Now, that's about enough for one lesson," smiled Ames. "Just let's go over that again. You said 'drive the chuck-wagon.' I think I understand that. I can drive a team of two or four horses, but I'd like to ask if being conductor of the dining car also includes cooking and serving?"

"Mostly, yes. When we're full handed or workin' extras they's usu'ly a cook b'sides the driver un wrangler—"

"Now, just there," and Ames smiled to think how simple the question might seem to this seasoned knight of the lasso, "I want to get things right as I go along—if you'll pardon the interruptions. Just what do you mean by 'wrangler'?"

"Oh," and the cowboy laughed good humoredly, "he tends the horses. Takes 'em to feed at night un hobbles 'em out er fences 'em in some canyon or out on a point, usin' ropes an' pack saddles un things, an' gits 'em—and waters 'em an' brings 'em inta camp. If we're ridin' wher' they's no pasture he herds the saddle bunch in the day-time."

"That's what you mean by 'day herding' then, is it?"

"N-o, no. O' course that's herdin' *horses*," and Ingle assumed a more patronizing air. Evidently he was just getting to appreciate the depth of the other's ignorance. "Day herdin' proper's holdin' the cattle that's been gathered up when they ain't no pasture fenced. Herdin' the 'saddle bunch' in the day-time's jist wranglin'."

Ames could not suppress a smile. They had started with *wrangling* and gone around the circle and back to *wrangling*, but the explanation was appreciated because it was enlightening.

"We gener'ly hev a Mexican or a Injun tu wrangle, but not all the time."

Ames smiled again, "I begin to see the class I come in," he said.

"Oh, they ain't nuthin' bad 'bout wranglin'," and the cowboy was evidently sincere in his effort to take the curse off his previous remarks.

"Exceptin' gittin' up the earliest, wranglin's a purty good job for a new man. He gits used to the names and the dispositions of the horses and has time to break one once in a while and git to be a purty good rider—if he wasn't at first."

"I suppose that until one can ride a bucking horse he hasn't much prestige on a ranch like this?"

"Much what?" And in that brief question Ames got the helpful suggestion of the advisability of adapting his discourse to the capacity of the frontiersman's learning and vocabulary. Above all things he must not give the impression that he was a highbrow, nor appear to flount his superior learning.

"To be a good rider is really necessary to the all-'round ranch hand, I suppose, and, that being true, I reckon that the man who is a poor rider is considered pretty small potatoes, isn't he?"

"Well," and the cowboy's smile had a mixture of humor and pity, "well, I'd try tu git the ridin' down pat if I's you. The feller that can't ride 'em purty handy's li'ble to be handed the worst of it right along. An' then they's a nuther thing: the good horses on a ranch like this have nearly always got a streak o' cussedness in 'em that makes it handy fer a man to be able tu set 'em when they don't always hit the ground in regulation step. An' more'n that, ridin' in the roughs after outlaw cattle ain't no rockin' chair stunt an' if a feller can't set a horse when his gait's a little billowy un choppy they wouldn't expect him to do his share in the pinches, an' o' course he's down in the tenderfoot class."

"It's clear to me already that if I'm to be considered a man doing his full share of the work I must get some practice, and oh! for the kind friend that would put me wise in a way not to make the experience too severe."

"Yep, but ridin' 'em's like swimmin'. You can't learn it on'y by doin' it."

"I'm aware of that, but there's ways of learning to swim without jumping into a torrent and also without letting everybody be spectator to your first frantic or foolish efforts."

The cowboy joined in the laugh.

"Oh, yes. I see. You'd 'preciate a little expert advice."

"Yes, very much, and a few private rehearsals."

CHAPTER IV

"THERE ARE ARTISTS AND ARTISTS"

AMES was almost afraid he had asked what was impossible, or at least unethical to the profession of cowpuncher. The cowboy's amusement at the suggestion, however, was pure amusement and not the ridicule that Ames had dreaded.

"Well," he said reflectively as though endeavoring to figure that possibility, "yes, you might work that some way. You might git out by yerself and swimp one and experiment all by yer lonesome."

"Now, if you'll just pardon the ignorance that prompts it, may I ask what you mean by 'swimp one'?"

The cowboy's laugh was hearty. "Oh, a bronk; a mustang."

"Yes, but that—what did you say? 'Swimp'?"

"Oh, that. Why, ketch one—lasso him and—"

"But there's where you presume too much on my ability. I think I—see myself out on the range lassoing a broncho—not quite. I'm not quite so green as to try. I'd want to practice on a post, or—a milch cow, for a while. Only a few months ago I wouldn't have known that a lasso was not some kind of a pole with a hook on the end like I once saw a man catching sheep with. If you can appreciate my rank ignorance of western ranch life and terms and find room for a little pity—and a lot of patience—I'm really hopeful of learning a few things. If I wait until I catch my broncho myself I'm afraid my training in the manly art of riding will be greatly delayed."

The cowboy's manner indicated that he felt himself mildly rebuked. At least he was sobered for the moment. His manner showed no resentment, but he had at last come to appreciate that the newcomer was in an entirely new environment, and that evidently both pity and patience were justified in dealing with

him. Ames' perfect frankness in admitting his own limitation, coupled with his earnest desire to know what he must do to be accepted as a real man of men, seemed to appeal to Ingle; thereafter he spoke with more earnest purpose. He seemed intuitively to understand that this was a man soliciting a man's chance; a man's help to manly achievement, with a sense of refinement that dreaded only the humiliation incident to wrong endeavor and not at all the consequences that right endeavor might entail. Ames, too, felt that this untutored cowboy was getting into his very soul, not in the merely critical but in a friendly spirit of understanding that formed the surest basis for real helpfulness. The cowboy's next remark was a compliment to them both.

"You don't want to waste any time, I see. Well, I've got to take the saddle bunch back now and if the boss don't give you somethin' else to do you kin saddle up and come with me. We keep 'em out south in a dry pasture where the feed's better, but we have to bring 'em up for water. It's time to take 'em back—an'—if yer not too tired—why mebbe they's one that'll be good to start on."

"Thanks, Jim. Now you're getting me going right. Tired isn't a fatal disease with me yet. It's like the lady's fainting spells, I only indulge it when it's convenient and entertaining. My front name, now, is 'ignorance,' my middle name's 'work,' and I'm anxious to meet up with the good old schoolmaster 'experience'—just sort of hoping he's in a benevolent mood when he sets me my tasks."

"Well, I'm his assistant now, but th' ol' boy's jist around the hill a ways. Le's ketch a couple of horses un go'n meet him. I's goin' to tell you to watch the Mex a while. He's got one tied up down tuther side o' the brandin' shoot that he's goin tu— Oh, he's goin' to saddle 'im now."

They had left the bunk house and started for the saddle shed to get their ropes when Ingle spied the

Mexican scuffling with a broncho in a corral adjoining the one that enclosed the watering tanks.

"I don't like his style," and it was evident that Ingle was for ignoring the Mexican and his "style." Ames' desire was to be loyal to Ingle, but he could not entirely ignore the Mexican and his work. It appeared that the man was trying to get the horse through the gate. It would approach suspiciously, then stop and brace its legs. The Mexican would begin to jerk and whip the horse and the horse would run backward, dragging the enraged and swearing man to the center of the corral.

The horse, though not large, was a fine specimen of the range-raised cross between the Spanish mustang and the eastern stock brought in by the settlers. He had lived until a few days ago entirely on the range in remote places where his band seldom so much as caught sight of a cowboy. Trapped, tied down, tortured, he had been, and finally tied fast to a mule and driven to the ranch, where he arrived weary and stiff, neck and jaws worn raw by the constant tugging of the rough rope which was fastened to the crude though strong hackamore with which he was 'necked' to the mule, an old and calloused veteran of many a similar experience.

With pity for the horse and resentment for the man's treatment of him, Ames stood and stared in a sort of stunned amazement from which he was aroused by Ingle's rather stern summons, "Come on! You ain't learnin' nuthin' there that's worth knowin'." Ames agreed with that verdict and followed Ingle on toward the shed, with the muttered thought that there was need of "someone's learnin' somethin'."

Going to the corral, Ingle, without saying anything to Ames, made the loop in his rope with unusual deliberation while Ames watched with keen interest. The horses crowded to the opposite side of the corral with manifest uneasiness, intently watching every move of the cowboy with varying degrees of concern

according to disposition and past experience. Ingle stepped quietly towards the huddled band; Ames expected to see him whirl the lariat over his head as he had seen the cowboys do in pictures. A rather sleepy looking little gray, near the edge of the bunch, seemed to wake to the fact that there were designs on him. He turned suddenly, lowered his head, and began to crowd toward the center of the band. In the effort he jostled an old brown who nipped him on the neck. Ingle, slightly crouched, was twenty-five or thirty feet away, the open loop of the lariat dangling from his hand and lying partly on the ground behind him. To escape the bite of the brown the little gray barely perceptibly raised his head for the fraction of a second.

Whi-r-r-ip!

The gray ducked, but the rope was no longer on the ground behind the cowboy, it was not even flying through air; it was around the gray's neck. There was a scamper of feet and the little gray stood alone with a sort of crest-fallen look which, rendered into plain "United States," would be, "Oh, well! What's the use?"

"There are artists and artists," said Ames.

Turning, Ingle smiled and said, "Like to try it? Take my rope if you want to."

Ames took the rope and Ingle turned his back considerately, and began bridling the captured horse. When he had finished, after prolonging the operation as long as possible, he turned to find Ames standing with the rope properly held and a perfectly formed loop in position. With a smile Ames advanced cautiously, crouching, just as Ingle had done, then turned and laughingly remarked that that was as far as the lesson had gone.

"Why don't you throw it?" bantered Ingle.

"Because I didn't see you do that part of it."

"Why not?" The cowboy smiled mischievously.

"I must have winked," laughed Ames.

"Quicker'n a wink, eh?" Ingle's smile was wholesome. He had caught and appreciated the delicacy of the compliment. "Well, it's tryin' that gits there."

Ames turned and walked toward the horses. They moved away, all but an indifferent old blue roan.

"He's darin' yu," laughed Ingle. "Call his bluff."

Ames walked nearer the horse and flipped the rope up and forward with more vigor than art. The edge of the loop struck his hat and knocked it down over his eyes. He reached for the hat but did not find it—not because the hat wasn't there, but because *he* wasn't. He was jerked violently forward and sprawled full length in the corral. Even in the violence of the fall he did not miss the thought that he must have caught *something*. He was lying on his back so that when he sat up he faced Ingle. The cowboy was in the paroxysm of an effort to control his laughter. Turning as he sprang up, the look of elation on his face at the thought of at least a partial victory—for surely he had caught the horse somehow, for how else could the sudden violent jerk be explained when there wasn't another horse anywhere near when he made the throw—his expression changed to one of wonder and chagrin, and a mixture of both. The rope was lying innocently on the ground some forty feet away and the old roan horse was just disappearing into the midst of the huddled animals a hundred feet farther off. At the changing expression on Ames' face Ingle let go his pent-up mirth and fairly doubled up and held his sides. Sheer wonder at what had happened so possessed Ames that he could only grin sheepishly; the mystified look, through which the grin had to work its way, formed a composite expression that defied description.

When Ingle could control himself sufficiently to talk he said, between fits of laughter, "You can't figure it out, kin ye? Well—" he had to wait for room for the words— "you—you overshot—and—the rope—when the rope come down acrost his neck he—" Laughter

for the time again checked the attempt at further explanation. Finally controlling himself to some degree again, Ingle went on:

"The rope," he said, "went plumb a past him—over his head, and when it touched the back o' his neck it scairt seventeen fits out o' him so he whirled like lightnin' and stepped on the rope over tuther side uv him jist so he got a good purchase on ye—un—"

"I know the rest," said Ames, his wonder at last giving way entirely to one of amusement with a tinge of chagrin. "I think experience winked that time or turned his face the other way. But why did that horse take on such a scare all of a sudden after seeming so indifferent at first? Was it conspiracy between you two?"

"Blind. Stone blind on that side," the cowboy explained as he laughed mirthfully, "an' he didn't know you were on the earth until that rope flew over his head."

"And then I knew *I* was *on the earth*, all right—all right. But, really, when I was jerked so violently I thought sure I had caught him and I'd not have regretted the tumble at all, but—I—really believe my pride fell all the harder because it first went up while I was going down."

As they laughed and talked Ames made another loop and asked which one he should try for.

"Oh, take yer pick," said Ingle. Then with a twinkle, " 'f you try for 'Ol' Blue' agin, I'd shoot from the other side. He won't feel so bad about it."

" 'Twas a sneaking trick—coming at him from the blind side, but at any rate the surprise was not all his. How about a flock shot?" And Ames walked toward the horses again.

"They're all yourn. Help yourself."

Ames walked closer this time, gave the rope a wider swing, and aimed for a quiet looking chestnut, having made sure that the animal could see him and was making no very frantic efforts to get out of the way.

When the rope landed Ames was glad he had not indicated the one aimed at, for "flock shot" it certainly appeared. A little snip-nosed sorrel, wise to the tricks of the trade, ducked his head under the jaws of a tall bay just as one edge of the loop dropped between the bay's ears. The bump from the little sorrel jarred the bay's head sidewise just as he lowered it to escape the rope and the loop, at first enclosing only corral dust and atmosphere and the long, hooked left ear of the bay, now by sheer accident fell in such a way as to encircle the necks of both horses. Ingle sprang to take the rope from Ames, but before he could reach him Ames was shooting toward the horses with more speed than grace, due to the fact that the little sorrel with the rope around his breast was standing braced, as a good cow-horse should, while the tall, hook-eared bay was dashing away around the edge of the band like a meteor, making the rope smoke where it slipped through the hondo.

"Let go!" shouted Ingle, and Ames didn't need a second command. He was down on his stomach, his elbows plowing up the dust as he slid toward the stationary little sorrel. Now every cowboy knows, and every novice at the business learns in time, that when it's time to let go of a rope it's time to *let go*, and the more *let* the better, for there's no discounting the *go* under circumstances like these. The trouble was that there was more go than let, with the result that a dozen feet of rope slipped through Ames' hands till they felt as though he had just let go of a white-hot iron.

"Hurt yuh?" Ingle was bending over him in earnest concern. Ames rolled over and sat up, pressing his burned hands together—he didn't know why. He just didn't know what else to do with them and they seemed to need *something* done with them. Standing up he turned to look for the horses and remarked demurely: "Experience was clear around behind the hill that time,

I reckon," and he was laughing in spite of the burning in his hands.

"Yes," replied Ingle, "but he's headed this way." Then after a pause, and with a look that might have meant reproof or just plain concern, he added: "You must be a Jonah."

Ames was not even smiling now.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because you've already mixed it with about the only three horses in that bunch that could or would have pulled off them stunts. Did yu aim at them?"

Ames smiled. "No," he said, "I was after the chestnut. My sights were too high again."

"Well,"—there was amusement and something else in the cowboy's smile now,—"well, yer judgment wuz better'n yer aim. That ol' bay hook-eared-son-o'-the-devil's jist simply the meanest bundle o' horse flesh that ever flopped a lip over a bunch o' grass. Satan's his name, and he does it full justice. Whenever yu shoot a rope at him yu want tu aim fer both front feet, and call it a clean miss 'f yu don't git 'em both in!"

Ames later learned the significance of that remark when he saw what happens to a running horse when the closing loop of a lariat suddenly clips taut around the front feet with the other end braced around the hip of a husky cowboy or fast to the "horn" of a well cinched saddle.

"We gotta git these horses out now, so put yer leather on the gray there and I'll swimp a nuther'n fer me."

Ames watched while Ingle dexterously flipped the lasso over the head of a white-faced brown. Saddling, they turned the band out of the corral. Ingle called something in Spanish to the Mexican who was still fighting his broncho, up near the saddle house. The Mexican grunted in reply and the two men rode away after the scampering horses.

CHAPTER V

GOOD ADVICE—BUT—

THE saddle-horse pasture was some two miles away from the ranch proper, and as Ames rode with the veteran cowboy he watched him closely for every possible suggestion of poise, of action or expression that might be the result of experience and point the way toward the attainment of Ames' first desire—to get into the good graces of the ranch hands and management. Ingle explained that the other boys were riding in a remote part of the range and that very likely either they two or Ames and the Mexican would leave in a day or two to take them a change of horses. As they turned the horses through the pasture gate Ames, anxious to avail himself of the services of his new friend in wooing the acquaintance of his longed-for friend, Experience, recalled the remark in the bunk house about the possibility of "private rehearsals." The cowboy's eyes twinkled.

"Ain't had enough fer one day yet, eh? Well—"

He did not finish the sentence but began to ride around the band as though to turn them against the bluff at the side of the canyon where it formed an angle with the fence. He took his lariat from the fork of his saddle as he did so. Motioning Ames to take a position so as to hold the horses in the angle formed by the fence and the bluff, Ingle rode in among them and threw his rope on a small mustangy-looking palomino. It was evident that this was no veteran of the rodeos, but a recruit. Ingle led the surging and rearing mustang some two hundred yards up the canyon to a spot more level and free from boulders. Dismounting, he worked his way slowly up his rope, hand-over-hand, all the while talking in a low tone and never taking his eyes off the animal for the fraction of a second. The mustang stood in moods manifestly alternating

between defiance and fright. Within arm's length of the broncho's head Ingle reached out his hand and waved it slightly, slowly moving it toward the animal's head. When the horse would snort, rear, or try to whirl away, the cowboy, calm, quiet, but determined, would repeat the tactics until finally his hand touched the trembling head, not on the sensitive nose nor ears, but on the jaw. Rubbing lightly and talking all the while so low that Ames could only hear a faint mumbling, the cowboy finally was rubbing the mustang's neck. Ames was struck with the contrast between the quiet, humane method of this man and the swearing, blustering cruelty of the Mexican. Now the cowboy was quietly fixing a half-hitch over the animal's nose. This done, he turned for the first time and spoke to Ames, directing him to take the hackamore off his horse and bring it to him. The hackamore on, Ames was directed to unsaddle his own horse and bring saddle and blankets to Ingle. While Ames was doing this Ingle fashioned a blinder from a large black kerchief or scarf, and the mustang now stood blindfolded. Quietly the blanket was placed, first lightly rubbing the back with it. The saddle was then raised, and lightly lowered to place, the cowboy working all the while with his right hand, the left grasping the hackamore close up under the jaws. As the cinch was being drawn up ever so gently the cowboy began slowly to work the animal's head gently from side to side to draw attention away from the operations elsewhere. As the cinch touched the body, however, there was a sudden start and it looked for an instant as though all the caution was going to waste. As the mustang started, Ingle gave the left hand a few violent jerks and the animal began backing. Meanwhile the right hand worked deftly and quickly and in less time than it can be told the cinch was firmly in place and the latigo securely fastened. With his right hand Ingle tested the position and security of the saddle by a firm, steady push, then a pull of the saddle horn; and

turned and walked away from the horse, squatted on his heels, and tucked the rope under an arm.

"Game?" he asked, looking at Ames quizzically.

"I think you said the only way to learn was by experience. But—" and his smile was a little forced—"isn't there some advice—doesn't experience ever speak?"

"To the wise, yes; to the foolish, it don't do no good," and the cowboy philosopher stood up smiling. "Whut'l yu have?"

"Well," said Ames, "if you put a forked stick on that horse it would stay there just till he moved. If you got on him there'd be no movement that could dislodge you. What's the difference? That's what I want to know. What would you do that the stick wouldn't or couldn't?"

"You're the wise guy, all right," said the philosophic cowpuncher with mock superiority. "Experience speaks. Hear ye, hear ye, and be convinced. Now, in the first place the stick would have no joints and simply stand stiff. I've got a few and not a single one un 'em would be stiff. Second place, the stick couldn't 'stribit its weight b'tween the seat an' the stirrups, un third, if the horse turned the stick 'ud jist keep right on goin'. I'd stay with the horse."

Ames laughed. "Your description of what the stick would do fits me so perfectly that it discourages me to begin with. Can't you say something encouraging?"

"Well," and the cowboy was in earnest now, "it's just this. Can you do what you're told?"

"I wouldn't even promise that under all circumstances, but this I can do; I can *try*."

"Well, as I was sayin', it's just this: Put most o' yer weight in yer stirrups, but don't have yer knees too stiff. If the horse rolls—that is, throws all four feet out sidewise—you must bend that knee, the one on the side his feet goes—so you stay on top un' not go down on the side. Hook yer feet under a little an'

keep yer toes pointed down so yer feet will stay in the stirrups. Don't squeeze with yer knees, lean back and don't let yer hips 'er back bone be too stiff. If you do you're the forked stick."

"Gee! I hope there isn't much more, I can't remember half of that. Let me see. Distribute your weight between the seat and the stirrups, turn your toes down, don't squeeze with your knees nor go too stiff in the back or hips," and Ames looked somewhat perturbed.

"That's the dope. You do them things an I'm bettin' on yu."

"I'll try it, but I can't guarantee anything."

Then, after a perplexed pause, as he stood regarding the horse: "But, how am I to get on? Will he stand?"

"An'," Ingle grinned, "I can't guarantee that. It'll depend on how you m'noover. I'll hold him fer yu."

Ingle got up and walked to the horse. "See," he said, taking hold of the rope close down to the jaw, "take hold here. Take the stirrup in yer right hand like this an' put yer left foot in. Then—"

If Ingle had not been dividing his attention between his illustrations and Ames, it never would have happened, but, suiting the act to the word, he put his foot well into the stirrup and raised his hand to reach for the saddle-horn, partially turning his head toward Ames as he spoke. As he did so his foot touched the horse in the girth space just back of the shoulder. Like a flash the animal lunged, whirled, and kicked viciously. So sudden and utterly unexpected was the start that it jerked the rope from Ingle's left hand, and the right not having grasped the saddle horn, the foot in the stirrup was the sole connection between man and beast and the cowboy's shoulders struck the ground, his foot still in the stirrup. Fortunately Ames had approached closely to get the other's words and illustrations. Quick as the proverbial cat Ames bounded at the horse which, plunging and kicking, had swerved first from him, then right towards him; with the last movement missing the cowboy with his front

feet by a hair's breadth, just as the temporary blindfold, by the force of the horse's impact with the ground, was jarred loose at one side and swung useless. Before the animal could swing for another kick Ames landed against the side of its head, his arms locked securely around the brute's neck close up to the head. He didn't know what he intended to do—in fact, no thought had formed except to *get hold of that horse.* Rearing and striking viciously the beast's front feet and legs struck Ames, but he was too close to allow much force to the swing and his body prevented the animal's seeing Ingle at all. Forcing his body against the horse's head and with his right arm over the back of its neck Ames, though swung clear of the ground part of the time, reached down and grasped the mustang's nose for leverage and wrenched violently upward and to the right at the same time as he threw the weight of his body downward to the left. The broncho's front feet were clear of the ground and the sudden wrench of his neck threw him violently on his side with his legs away from Ingle, while Ames sat on the ground with the animal's head in his lap. His back was to Ingle so he did not see that gentleman kick his foot out of the slackened stirrup and spring up.

If this description had simply been: "Ames sprang at the horse, grabbed him by the head, and flung him to the ground," the act would still have been quicker than the telling. It was simply a whirl, a vicious kick, a strike with the fore feet, another attempt to jump and—*down*, and the first Ames knew of the result of his struggle was the low, steady voice of Ingle saying, "Let 'im up." Then, "No, wait."

Stepping to the animal's head and taking a firm hold on the jaw-piece of the hackamore, Ingle said, "Let go. I'll take him," and Ames was struck at the calm, matter-of-fact manner of the man. Ingle lifted the horse's head from Ames' lap and Ames stood up.

"I'll crawl him as he gets up." Ingle's look was determined now.

"No, let me, please," and as the horse was struggling to his feet Ames stepped in front of Ingle and threw his leg across the rising animal. Ingle hastily caught the dangling blindfold and drew it firmly across the horse's eyes, and said quickly, "Put yer feet in—quick! The stirrups!"

By that time the mustang was on its feet, but blindfolded and perplexed by the occurrences of the last minute-and-a-half. Ames complied with the cowboy's suggestion, and Ingle, holding the horse by one hand and working with the other, quickly fashioned the rope into reins and handed them to Ames with the suggestion to let the horse stand until he could mount his own. Then he rode close to Ames and remarked, "Well, how's yer pulse?"

"Haven't an idea," said Ames with a rather sickly smile, trying his best to recall those first principles which the cowboy had laid down for his benefit and half wishing he could get off and think them over. At every tremble of the confused horse they seemed to shake loose and threaten to fall, and Ames imagined that if the horse jumped just once, all those good suggestions would tumble like snow from a bumped tree. Ingle rattled his stirrup a little and as the mustang hunched slightly but quickly, but without moving a foot, a startled look went over Ames' face and his knees pressed the horse's sides suddenly.

"There goes them knees."

The cow puncher's voice was stern, but his eyes were twinkling. "Jist as sure as yu squeeze 'im with yer knees it's the goodbye hug. Throw yer weight more in the stirrups un' hook yer feet under a little, toes down, but keep them knees away from 'im. Lean back when he starts un' let yer arms give but not yer body, when his head goes down. He's gittin' uneasy. Look pleasant now, we're goin't tu light the fuse," and Ingle jerked off the blinder.

CHAPTER VI

"SURE YER HEAD'S ON STRAIGHT?"

TO Ames' great surprise, the mustang flipped one ear and let out a loud snort, such as only mustangs can, while he looked, first at Ingle, then at the saddle horses stringing off up the canyon, and snorted again.

Ames looked at the cowboy and was beginning to wonder if it was some kind of a "put-up job."

Ingle smiled. "Feelin' good?" he bantered.

"A little lonely," and Ames grinned sickly. "Ideas would be good company now. I wonder if there's any in the worl—"

Yes, the mustang had one. He would go to the saddle bunch, if he could edge by the mounted man. He hadn't given the sickly feeling man on his back a thought. As he started gingerly forward and sidewise he noticed the burden on his back and started to run. The thing on his back was coming too. He must pitch it off and he went to the task. It looked as if it would really be easy but just as Ames' gripping knees began to slide up into the saddle Ingle spurred close and caught him by the back of the shirt and yelled:

"Them dam' knees, man! Open up there!"

Ames obeyed and, to his surprise and almost his regret, he came down into the saddle in good position. Grabbing the reins Ingle jerked the mustang's head up and snubbed it close by the horn of his own saddle; the broncho stopped. Ames looked down, surprised that the horse was still under him; then he looked at Ingle in a sort of pleading, questioning way. The cowboy's face showed disgust.

"It ain't the style, 'round here, tu ride 'em with your knees in the saddle! Is that some circus stunt you're tryin' tu pull off? If it is, have it yer way, an' 'scuse me fer buttin' in."

Chagrin gave way to anger in Ames, and resentment

mixed with pride, and the cowboy philosopher was satisfied with progress. To make sure, however, that that resentment and pride did the service for which he called it into play, Ingle continued with pretended sarcasm:

"If yu don't want no advice, why pass it up, but fer hell sake show that yu got sum'p'n better."

Ames thought of jumping off the horse and showing this taunting cowpuncher that he couldn't be treated that way, but, he reflected, if he stopped now he would virtually prove his failure and deserve the contempt the cowboy showed. Looking down, he placed his feet in the stirrups.

"Might uz well cut 'em off fer all the good they do yu," taunted the cowboy. "Shove yer feet down in them stirrups an' if you'll quit huggin' with yer knees they'll likely stay there. Squeeze 'im with yer knees an' they'll be up in the saddle agin b' the second jump."

Ames was mad clear through and, without suspecting that his state of mind was just what the wise Ingle was after, he settled into the saddle firmly and threw his feet forcefully into the stirrups.

Giving the mustang some slack again, Ingle said tauntingly as he did so, "Nice-little-boysey, kneel up in yer saddle an' say yer prayers!"

Ames was boiling, but now he knew where his knees *didn't* belong, and he was resolved to see that they didn't get up into the saddle again. Ingle started up the canyon on the run and the mustang struck a like gait for three or four rods, when his head went down and Ingle yelled, "Lean back!" Ames obeyed just in time to keep from climbing the pommel of his saddle for a dive over the horse's head. While the broncho jumped straight ahead Ames felt quite secure, but when the mustang began to "side-wind"—that is, jump first to the right and then to the left, as the puncher gave him more rope and less pace, Ames felt the need of some side hold and began to squeeze with his knees.

"Nice boy," taunted Ingle, "kneel in the saddle." At the taunt Ames stopped pressure with the knees but felt the need of some brace against that zig-zag rolling, rolling motion.

"Down in yer stirrups," snapped the cowboy. Ames obeyed and felt relief at the added security. But two more jumps and the motion changed. The horse seemed to go up higher, hit the ground harder and with a sudden backward motion. Ames reached out in front for something to brace against, but the bright May atmosphere didn't seem at all substantial.

"Going," yelled Ingle, "going!—gone!"

Ames saw nothing but space, so he reached out and took a generous armful of nothing, the mustang slipped from beneath him, downward and backward—somewhere,—and then our old friend gravity took a hand in the game.

"What did you say that for?" snapped Ames as he pulled himself to a sitting posture from his ungainly sprawl in the dust.

"Never told no lie, did I?" Ingle sat on his horse leaning down toward the dust-smeared Ames, and his voice was steely but his eyes were a puzzle. Then as Ames slowly got to his feet he added, "Got a nuf?"

"You're the teacher," said Ames doggedly, "I'll stay till school's out."

"Hurt any?" Ingle's voice softened some.

"I'm not crying any, am I?"—defiantly.

"Not tu notice."

Ingle was icy again. "Sure yer head's on straight?" he asked sarcastically.

"Do you want to say that it isn't?"

Ingle didn't answer but turned his attention to the broncho which he still held snubbed to his saddle horn. Dismounting, he replaced the blindfold on the mustang, tugged at the saddle to satisfy himself of its security, tightened the cinch, and turned to Ames.

"The Chart Class havin' done very well," he said, his

voice still cold and mocking, "will the First Readers please come forward?"

When Ames started forward he didn't know whether he was going to get on that mustang or hit that taunting bully in the face. He chose the horse, however, as the cowboy held it tight and blindfolded.

"Let him stand until I git on," suggested Ingle. Mounting, he turned to Ames and continued his taunts.

"Towards the last, that time, your neck seemed too limber fer yer head un' let it flop con'sider'ble. Maybe you better take it off, sense it don't 'peer tu be no use, nohow." As he finished he jerked up the blinder and slapped the mustangs ears, and yelled:

"Nice li'l knees squeeze mean ol' horsey."

This time Ames' head didn't flop and his knees didn't squeeze and his feet stayed in the stirrups, low down and well under. When the beast reached the up-and-backward stage this time Ames didn't know whether Ingle had shouted "down-in-yer-stirrups-un-lean-back" or whether he just thought of it. At any rate the idea hit hard and stuck.

"Going!" yelled the taunting cowboy.

Ames decided to beat him within an inch of his life—when this—present—matter—was—settled—settled—yes, settled. But there didn't seem to be anything settling—to speak of.

"Going!" Again the taunt. But Ingle's manner changed suddenly and he finished in a sing-song: "tu stick—tu stick. He's goin' tu stick—tu stick!"

The mustang stopped, winded, and as he stood panting Ames forgot his resolve to beat Ingle and glanced at that gentleman as though expecting some comment.

"Bein' mad—" the veteran "buster" smiled as he spoke— "bein' mad's lots better'n bein' scairt," and his grin spread—big and broad—the quintessence of wisdom and the joy of victory.

"Well, you old philosopher," said Ames, as for the first time there dawned upon him the meaning of

Ingle's taunts. He slapped the stirrups against the mustang's flanks and took another "churning" just to prove—really, truly prove—the thoroughness of the lessons he had learned, thanks to a good teacher.

When the two returned to the ranch, Ames was riding the mustang. Everyone on the ranch was surprised; Ames came in with different posture, different motion, different air. Whereas he had come before tired, stooping, and uncertain, he now came like a confident vaquero to the manner born. He was surprised himself at the miracle that had been wrought.

Frye and Jackson stood watching him narrowly.

"He's puttin' up somethin'," said the foreman suspiciously. "Gotta watch him."

"Yep," said his employer. "I'd keep an eye on him—fer a while at least. He was certainly 'putting on' or 'throwin' off' when he came. Find what he's up to or fire him. Maybe just a bit of humor, and then it may be something deep and devilish."

At supper, first Mr. Frye and then his foreman would suddenly snap out some leading question while watching Ames, but with crude efforts to disguise that fact. It was so palpably plain that they were suspicious that Ames was annoyed; it required an effort to ignore their attitude and not seem resentful of their questions and manner.

Ingle volunteered nothing of their doings at the pasture and Ames had no occasion to do so. Coming in, Ames had started to express his gratitude for Ingle's shrewd and effective efforts but that gentleman cut him off in a way to leave little reason to refer to the subject again.

"Keep the gush," had been Ingle's response. Ames was not just sure of the meaning, but interrupted the cryptic words as notice that sentiment was taboo with this cult.

"You paid up in advance fer all you got—an' then some," Ingle finished, and the incident was alluded to only once thereafter.

CHAPTER VII

"HOW DOES A HORSE LAUGH?"

THE next morning, sore from the bumps and shakings of the previous day, Ames went about his work in a quiet but more self-assured manner. It had been decided that Ames and the Mexican should take the change of horses to the riders on the extreme southern portion of the range. At Ingle's suggestion Ames accompanied his friend and teacher to the pasture to bring in and separate the horses that were to be taken. Ames rode his own horse out, taking along the broncho for the return trip, not knowing that Ingle's suggestion to do this was a concession to his soreness and stiffness. The fact of the matter was, Ingle thought it advisable to give his pupil his second lesson in private.

Arriving at the pasture Ingle permitted Ames to saddle the mustang himself and was much impressed by the calm assurance with which he went about the matter, and the accuracy with which he had observed, and now duplicated, the cowboy's methods of the previous day.

"Nerve and sense; he's got 'em both," was the teacher's comment to himself as he saw the made-over tenderfoot of a few hours previous preparing to mount without the slightest semblance of misgiving or trepidation. The cowboy also knew full well that the man before him was not fooling himself in the least but that his keen mind was tense with the knowledge of his own limitations, yet wide awake to every detail of the present business and with a poise of masterful self-control.

Completing the saddling by assuring himself of the security and correct position of the saddle as he had observed Ingle do, Ames turned to the cowboy and smiled.

"All ready but the temper," he said. "What have you got for me today?"

Ingle laughed heartily, "Oh," he said confidently, "I think you kin do without that today. Only be sure you have at least one good hand-holt when you put your foot in the stirrup 'cause I ain't certain I could 'bull-dog' 'im so purty an' quick as you did." There was gratitude in the look.

"That was fine, mighty fine," he concluded.

Ames had begun to think the incident was so matter-of-fact and commonplace in this rugged, wild life as to excite no comment or attract no more than mere passing notice.

One bit of advice the cowpuncher added which the sudden start of the horse the previous day had caused to be omitted: "Work his head jist a little with yer left hand while yer gittin' the stirrup," he said.

Ames complied and was soon in the saddle by rising carefully and settling into it gently. His right foot in the stirrup, he pushed both down firmly, "hooked under" and "toes down." Taking the reins in his left hand he reached over and raised the blinder; and in the fraction of a minute was riding for his diploma. It came seven and a half minutes later and was verbal, the teacher saying simply: "He's your meat. They ain't nothin' to it. You kin ride 'im tul the lid flies off'n hell. Yer a 'buster' fer shore. On'y don't git careless."

"Thanks," said Ames, too pleased for further words, and turning the horses out they started back to the ranch.

While the horses drank from the tanks in the corral Jackson, the foreman, came to Ames.

"Turn the flaxy in the bunch and ketch a broke un," he commanded. "José's gonna ride the black bolly an' one o' you'll need a gentle 'un." The foreman strode away after boring into Ames for half a minute with his steely gaze. Ames turned to Ingle.

"Think I dare throw at that bunch again," he

laughed. There was amusement but no derision in the puncher's smile as he answered cryptically that he "seen Experience round here somewhere's."

"He's apt to be clear over the mountain, though, by the time I get a lasso ready."

"He'll be peekin' over the top, I'll bet," and the smile of the cowpuncher was encouraging.

"He's apt to wink just at the wrong time, said Ames, his lariat in readiness, and starting toward the horses. "What had I better ride?"

"Take 'Chug,' the little snip-nosed sorrel," Ingle grinningly advised. "On'y leave 'Ol Satan' out uv it this time. One at a time's enough."

"That's where Experience lays down on me," said Ames, "or turns its head. My rope either shuts up like a busted balloon or doesn't go where I aim it."

"Never saw no one b't whut had tu learn," the sage Ingle replied. "Vent dubs," he added as Ames walked toward the horses.

"Chug," by reason of his docility and self confidence, or unconcern, was near the outer edge of the band. As Ames approached he moved next to a larger brown, and just as Ames threw the rope he ducked under the brown's neck; the rope lay across his withers but encircled nothing.

Ames turned and looked at the top of the mountain. "Did you see anything of 'Experience'?" he said, glancing at Ingle, who, grinning, pointed to the wise little horse.

"Thought I saw 'im over there," he said.

Ames blushed. "Oh, yes. At the wrong end of the rope."

For the next throw Ames cut Chug away from the others and held him in a corner by himself, whereupon the wise little snip nose was pointed straight at Ames with a sort of now-I-dare-you-to-try-it expression. Calling the bluff Ames made a throw whereat the wise little head dropped suddenly, but not a foot moved.

The rope lay along the horse's back and withers but nary a head therein.

"Say," said Ames, with an effort at suavity, but tinged with disgust, as he turned to the cowboy, "how does a horse laugh?"

Ingle, laughing heartily pointed to the horse. "Jist like that, I should judge," he said.

Preparing the rope again, Ames walked still closer to the horse and made him turn broad side and start toward the others. This time the loop was large and the throw short and though Chug dropped his evasive head almost between his feet the fact that he was moving forward resulted in his going into the rope, which on account of the size of the loop and the absence of the requisite dexterity, Ames did not draw up until it was around the horse's body. "Chug" turned and gave his tormentor a look as though he would say, "Well, that's not much to be proud of, I had to crawl into it," and stood meekly while Ames walked up and put the rope on his neck.

While Ames was changing his saddle from the mustang to the new mount, Ingle caught the old blue-roan of the previous day's incident and proceeded to place a pack outfit on him, while the Mexican was working to saddle his broncho. At every move the black horse made the Mexican would swear and jerk or hit him. All the other men within sight or hearing seemed to choose to ignore the brutal proceedings, but Ames, whose feeling became more and more wrought up, completed his saddling and walked over to the Mexican intending to offer assistance and possibly a remonstrance. As the Mexican drew the cinch up against the horse it reared high and the Mexican surged downward and backward on the hackamore in such a way as to throw the animal. No sooner had the horse struck the ground than the Mexican seized it by the nose and, with one foot on the forelock of its mane to hold the top of the head firm to the ground, wrenched upward the nose and began to beat the

animal on the head with a short, heavy club and to stamp the pinioned ears with the boot heel of his unengaged foot.

"Stop that! Stop it, I tell you!"

White-hot, Ames seized the enraged Mexican by the shoulder and jerked him violently. The Mexican turned and struck him across the side of the face with the club. The swing was too short for the blow to be very effective, but Ames struck back before he could control himself. In one hand Ames held the coiled lariat he had just started to tie on his saddle. At his blow the Mexican staggered back a step, nearly falling. As he partially turned without fully straightening up Ames caught the glint of steel in his hand. Quick as lightning flew the coiled rope so entangling or retarding the motion that before the gun could be fairly raised Ames had followed the rope and caught the arm of the hand that held the gun in time to deflect the shot so that it passed through a sagging fold of his shirt over his left hip. Jerking the man toward him suddenly, Ames seized the revolver and wrenched it so violently that the trigger guard cut blood on the Mexican's finger; another and perhaps unintentional shot started a leak in an elevated water tank at the corner of the house.

Once possessed of the weapon, Ames was puzzled as to what disposition to make of either it or the Mexican. Ingle was coming up from the store shack where he had gone to put provisions in the pack for Ames and the Mexican. Frye came rather leisurely from the house and Jackson, the foreman, looked on apparently unconcernedly from near the corral gate. Ames' first impulse was to turn the Mexican over to Ingle, he being the first to approach, but on second thought he concluded it best not to draw his friend into the matter at all. Turning to Mr. Frye, therefore, and holding the sullen Mexican firmly by the collar he said, in a calm though manifestly determined tone, "Mr. Frye, I suppose I'll have to kill him unless you can

stand sponsor for his future behavior, for I shall not presume to trust him on his own responsibility." Then, to impress both the ranchman and the culprit with the fact that he meant it, though he hadn't the slightest notion of harming the Mexican beyond what was necessary for his own personal safety, he added sharply with a flourish of the weapon, "What about it?"

Mr. Frye said something to the Mexican in Spanish, receiving a grunted assent of some kind.

"Let him go," said Mr. Frye, and after Ames had done so he added with a slight tinge of resentment. "That's some task you're giving me, don't you think?"

"If it's *too* much," said Ames cooly, "I'll relieve you of it," and he stood perfectly still looking squarely into the eyes of the cattleman. Frye winced, looked as though he was going to retort in anger, but hesitated, then smiled as he replied that it was all right as it was.

"Then," said Ames, holding out the pistol to Frye, "I'll turn this over to you—unless,—" he hesitated and looked at the Mexican, then back to Frye,— "unless, *you say* to give it to *him*."

The big cattleman could not but admire the cool, calculating cleverness with which the newcomer had unloaded a rather heavy responsibility, the more so because he knew the motive was not fear but the adroit disposing of a situation in the best possible manner under the circumstances. After a moment's hesitation he reached for the gun.

"I'll take it," he said, "for the time being, at least."

While Ames coolly picked up and recoiled the lariat Mr. Frye and his foreman conversed together in low tones some sixty feet away.

CHAPTER VIII

"NERVE AND SENSE"

"SOME clever," said the cattleman when close to the foreman.

"Dam' slick, I should say," said the steely-eyed Jackson. "Why'd yu let him do it?"

"Do what? What'd I let him do?"

"Let 'im do!" The foreman's disgust was manifest in tone and manner. "Let 'im do? Why not a damned thing, only make you personally responsible for his future safety. Not much I guess—in view of future possibilities. You're that greaser's perpetual bondsman. Not by a few dirty dollars but on yer—yer honor. That's what you've done. Un 'f you'll take my advice you'll git rid of the obligation mighty quick."

It was clear that the foreman's words impressed his employer.

"How?" after a puzzled moment.

"How—?" almost snapped the foreman, "why, by sendin' him back where he come from. What d'yu 'spose he's here fer? Comes tenderfootin' here only yist'day noon an' four hours after comes back frum the pasture ridin' a broncho like he'd been doin' it ev'ry day of his life. Who is he? What is he? Where'd 'e come from? Whut's he here for? Kin yu answer them questions?"

The fervor of the foreman's excitement increased as he spoke, mainly because he perceived that while he puzzled his employer he did not entirely convince him.

Undecided for the moment as to what answer to make, Mr. Frye looked at his foreman, then at the pistol in his own hand, at the Mexican slinking in the shade of the water tank, and finally at Ames coolly assisting Ingle to put the pack on "Old Blue."

Still gazing at Ames, and as though to himself more than to Jackson, the big man finally spoke.

"Gad! that nerve!" he said with fervor. "Nerve," he repeated, "and—and sense to go with it. That combination," he continued, turning to Jackson, "is one I put my money on *every time*."

"Even when it's your enemy?" The foreman was some exasperated.

"Ye—eh." A pause. "Yes, even then. You can sort of figure on what a nervy, sensible man'll do, but a blame fool and coward has you up in the air the whole time." There being no reply he went on, "But why do you assume he's an enemy, Jackson?"

The foreman wanted to appear discreet but not fearful nor foolish.

"Well," he ventured, after a reflective pause, "all things considered—" he hesitated with a slight glance of embarrassment at his employer and corrected himself—"*some* things considered, I think safety first—a—a purty good idea—and—"

The big man showed resentment.

"And," he repeated with manifest sarcasm, "what becomes of the man who stampedes at the first possibility of danger? Every old poker player that ever sat in a real game knows that it must be either nerve or a complete backdown. We're not in Mexico, now, you must remember." Another pause, and with significant look at the foreman, he asked:

"What would you have done?"

"Stayed away—left 'em to it," the foreman answered quickly.

"But that isn't the question. I *was* there—here. Not in Mexico, but Arizona, right close to the Utah line, and a killing is no mere pastime with these people. With them it's plain out-and-out murder. If I hadn't taken over the Mexican and the other one—" glancing at Ames—"had plugged him there'd been some muss, the best we could do,—nursing a near dead greaser, or sendin' *him* to the settlements dead or alive, or

burying him on the quiet. Supposin' he," indicating Ames, "had handed back the gun? What then? Why, either the Mexican would have killed or wounded him or turned his friend from then on, and in either event what better would things be than they are now? Can you tell me that?"

Plainly the foreman was impressed if not assured.

"Before you ever came up here," continued Frye, "I told you plainly that our policy must take into consideration the different conditions. In Mexico it was no question of law but of money. Here it's different, and while our policy is, and must be, to get control of our range, it must be by at least a semblance of law, and the more we do that attracts the attention of others the worse off we are. Do you get me?"

The foreman could not urge anything in the way of reason or argument against the observations of his employer, but it was contrary to all his previous experience to tolerate anyone whom he did not like, much less one whom he feared. Impressed from the first by Ames' calm, self-reliant manner, made really suspicious by the miracle of his sudden transformation from tenderfoot to an apparently seasoned vaquero and broncho buster, this last exhibition of nerve and of masterful self-possession to catch so adroitly and bind the astute Mr. Jacob Frye, had put into the mind and being of this hard, stern, unbending, uncompromising man the nearest to a sense of fear he had ever known. He was not used to tolerating any condition he did not like; and he was now confronted with just such a predicament with neither logic nor the power to meet it to his liking. To be both silent and inactive was to be, or at least to appear, sullen. Frye terminated the discussion with the admonition to ponder what he had said and if the scheme was not understood or not to the foreman's liking to let it be known.

"All ready, Mr. Frye, whenever your Mexican is," said Ames with a nice mixture of deference and unconcern.

Mr. Frye smiled. "Think you'd enjoy each other's company," he said, looking toward the still cowed and dejected José. Ames smiled also, but his eyes kindled as he said: "That will depend upon his behavior. I'm sure that if he abuses that colt any more there'll be little enjoyment for either of us."

"Well," said Frye, turning to the foreman as he spoke, "I think Jim had better go with the horses. José will not be out of the sulks for a week."

Jackson nodded assent.

"Very well," said Ames, turning to go. A few steps and he turned again and addressed them both:

"I wonder—" he was a little puzzled as to just the form of request he wanted to make as well as to whom to address it, "does the black horse belong to the Mexican?" he finally asked.

Both answered. Each in his characteristic way.

"No," said Mr. Frye.

"Cump'ny horse," said the foreman.

Ames hesitated a moment to see if the purpose of his inquiry was not discerned.

The foreman was either stupid or sullen, but Frye smiled.

"Want him?" he asked.

Ames was sober, almost stern.

"I'd like to take him," he said.

"Help yourself," and there was mirth in the big man's smile. Jackson, however, was silent until Ames started after the black broncho, still standing saddled in the angle where the pasture fence joined the corral whither he had fled during the melee when the shooting occurred.

Both men watched while he went and caught the frightened animal, led it to the saddle shed, and replaced the Mexican's saddle with his own.

"He'll be runnin' this ol' ranch 'fore long 'f you keep lettin' him have his way," said the sullen, jealous Jackson.

"Oh, that," said Frye, "depends upon—several things."

And the Mexican watched Ames ride away on the black bolly with a feeling that boded no good for the rider.

At first the broncho had reared and pitched some and darted to right and left in manifest fear of the rider, but Ames spoke quietly, and stroked his neck soothingly, and let him fall into line and trail behind as Ingle led "Old Blue" with the pack and the saddle horses trailing after him.

As they jogged southward along the trail that skirted the foot of the mountain, Ames, at first alert to every possibility of trouble with the near-outlaw, gradually gave over to confidence and fell into thoughtful contemplation of the occurrences of the past few hours and of their possibilities. He could scarcely keep himself in the belief that not twenty hours ago he had come to the ranch and had made advancement in some respects such as he had not thought possible in weeks of time. He felt that the incidents just passed had developed him considerably; that they had added to his favor with Mr. Frye, and with Ingle, but established him permanently in the disfavor if not the actual enmity of the Mexican. How Jackson, the foreman, looked upon him as the result of the episode with the Mexican he was not sure, though the man's manner had impressed Ames unfavorably. The dark, swarthy man first seen with the owner and the manager on the porch when Ames first arrived had not been seen since. Taking matters all in all, therefore, Ames felt that his partial two days on the ranch netted success, and he was glad that, thanks to the wise friendliness of Ingle, he could, even this soon, go among the other cowboys to much better advantage than he had anticipated.

At this point his appraisement of himself and his possible progress was interrupted. Ingle had stopped and was tying the pack horse to a tree. This done, he

took down his rope and caught Chug, and led him toward Ames.

"It's more'n twenty miles to where the boys are workin', an' I think you better put yer leather on this one 'till we're nearly there, 'f you don't mind."

The change was made and from that point on the two men rode together, driving the horses before them —all but the black broncho, which was led in order to be handy for the change again later. It was not until Ames changed back to the black that he appreciated the motive of Ingle's suggestion. The cowboy knew the advantage it would be to his new friend to ride into the camp of the other cowboys on the Mexican's "Black Bolly" and had given Ames the psychological advantage of his wisdom.

CHAPTER IX

"HIGHER MATHEMATICS AND APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY"

THE trail led along the foot of the mountain proper, now through rolling foot hills, now through an open space covered only with sage and an occasional cactus, through groves of pinion and scrub cedar. Occasionally it dropped down into a deep narrow canyon leading down to the great gorge of the Grand Canyon from the mountain valleys above; often densely covered in the bottom and partly up the sides with honey locusts or "cat-claws," so named on account of the hooked thorns with which they are covered. After a few contacts with these Ames appreciated the need of the heavy leather chapps, thick gloves, leather wrist-guards, and heavy denim jumpers with which they had decked themselves before leaving the ranch.

Finally at a high point in the trail they emerged from a rather dense grove of pinion and could look down on the sloping country below. Ingle pointed to a dust cloud in front of them some miles away.

"The hold-up!" he said; then, noting Ames' puzzled look, he explained that they were apprcaching the range where the gathering was in progress and that some open place near the center of the range covered by the day's ride was selected as the rallying point toward which each man was to "point" any cattle that he might "jump up" with a view to meeting at or near a stated time. The cattle in this particular section, Ingle further explained, were among the wildest; and the cloud of dust was the result of the "milling" the cowboys were giving them in the effort to hold them, a feat of which Ames was to learn more later. Presently another streak of dust was seen in the edge of the cedars over beyond, and a moment later a band of cattle shot out of the timber, heading somewhat away

from the herd held in the center of the flat. A mounted cowboy could be seen still farther away, racing parallel with the running cattle.

"Now, there you are," said Ingle motioning with gauntleted hand toward the distant race. "Watch him and you'll get your first lesson—and a good one—in the way to handle wild cattle on the range. That's Jack Eager, and he knows the game from the ground up."

How anyone alive could tell that that shooting meteoric dot with its little tail of white dust was any particular man was a mystery to Ames, but he watched in silence for a minute or two. There did not seem to be the slightest variance in the relative positions of the cowboy and the cattle, so finally Ames asked as to the probability of the cowboy's being able to head them.

"Watch him," was the only reply vouchsafed.

To Ames it looked as though there was the possibility of the cattle outrunning the burdened horse, but presently he perceived that the horseman, while not losing anything in relative speed, was gradually crowding closer and closer to the running cattle, then that they were, by reason of that flank pressure, veering slightly toward the center of the flat where the larger herd was being held.

The trail began to drop down now, and in order not to lose sight of the moving panorama, Ingle reined up and proposed that Ames "keep an eye on the doin's b'low" while he put the saddle back on "Black Bolly," to which plan Ames gladly gave silent assent by promptly dismounting and walking to a slight eminence some hundred feet to the left. Presently he observed another dust streak closer and almost directly between him and the fidgety, ever threshing herd held in the middle of the flat beyond. As the dust was wafted to one side he could distinctly count some fifteen head of cattle in this nearer running herd going

straight at the dust cloud of the "hold up." Ingle also noticed this last appearance.

"Perk," he said, laconically, adding after a pause, "Jed Perkins. Not in Jack's class. Watch 'em both—'specially when they 'close in.' "

Ames did not need the injunction to "watch," and assumed that "when they close in" had reference to that point of the situation when the running bands approached the more stationary one now almost directly between them. "Perkins," as Ingle had identified the nearer vaquero by some occult means which Ames could not fathom, was nearly behind his band shooting them straight at the "hold up," while Ames began to doubt the entire success of the efforts of the other, for his band was certainly going to pass unless the rider headed them off very soon. Probably that was his intention now, for it seemed that the horse was gaining. But in Ames' opinion he was not making sufficient speed to get ahead of the running cattle. Clearly the rider was pressing in on them, but it was equally clear that they were surely going to pass—yes, they had beaten the straining horse, and had passed the herd, it appeared by several hundred yards. But the running centaur was sticking to their outer flank. Now it looked as if there was still a chance for him, for he was gaining slightly and the running cattle were strung out in a long narrow thread. Perceptibly—yes, plainly—they were being pressed in just sufficiently to offer the possibility of their turning back into, or at least toward, the herd. All unconsciously to himself Ames was tense with the excitement of the race. Ingle had completed his task and tied the black to a tree and was now approaching, but Ames did not know that.

"Ho-o-old up, Jack, ol' boy, ho-old up! Not too fast, they'll break behind you."

Then it came to Ames in a flash that the cowboy's task was not to get *some* of these cattle into that hold-up herd, but *all of them*; and clearly if he rode too far to the lead some of the rear ones would drop out

and offer the problem of losing some or all. As though by some mystic signal of communication the racing cowboy had evidently checked his horse almost as Ingle spoke, for the cattle were now running a sort of parabola instead of the even arc as before. The rear ones were closing up and the cowboy seemed to know the almost mathematically exact relative position to take to prevent the threatened break and the psychological moment to act. When Ames had seen Ingle rope the saddle-horse the day of his arrival at the ranch he had remarked that there are artists and artists. With just one more day's experience he was ready to say that cow-punching was both an art and a science, for there before his very eyes was the concrete evidence—higher mathematics, if you please, and applied psychology combined in one very practical yet technical operation; two men two or three miles apart saw the problem and its solution exactly alike. Ames began to wonder if it might not be that cowboys, like poets, were born, not made. He could not recall having witnessed anything so fascinating before in all his life.

"That'll do, ol' boy, come alive now!" Ingle was saying, and yes, sir—as sure as Ames stood there Jack Eager was "coming alive." The horse was closing in again and the arc of the circle was almost perfect—no, it was veering inward the reversed parabola. Another horseman left the standing herd and was crossing behind the running cattle. More higher mathematics and psychology, for the last entrant into this animated puzzle was at the same time overtaking and aiding to circle this running bunch of cattle with the minimum loss of advance and the maximum gain of swing to the arc, like a trained jockey on the first and third quarter of a circle race course. As the other cowboy began to come up alongside of the running cattle Eager forged ahead in the same proportion and was finally alongside of the leaders, pushing them gradually but persistently inward toward the standing herd. When Eager had made nearly two-thirds of the

circle around the "hold-up bunch" Ames asked why he did not force them into the herd.

"Can't do it," Ingle explained. "Fight 'f he crowds too hard after that much run. Every good puncher avoids gettin' 'em on the prod, cuz then it's let 'em go, tie 'em up, er jist stick 'round till they cool off. Can't handle 'em worth a damn." Ames perceived the philosophy of Jack Eager's tactics—and the result, for he was now well ahead of the cattle and not too close; they were slowing down and manifestly considering the advisability of joining the herd. Now they were standing. The horseman had stopped also, presently to ride cautiously, not straight toward the panting cattle, but zig-zag, this way and that, but ever closer and closer. The cattle had now for the first time manifested some notice of the herd in the flat below and after a few moments of hesitation yielded to the pressure of the insistent rider on the slope above and trotted into the herd with scarcely a perceptible disturbance.

"Good work," was Ingle's terse comment. Then he added, "Now watch 'Perky'—"

Perky's bunch was still heading for the main herd with "Perky" close behind them. Ames could see no fault in the tactics pursued, but Ingle evidently could.

"Look at the bonehead," he said with manifest disgust. "Stampede 'em sure'n hell 'f he—"

Ingle did not finish, but turned and ran for his horse and vaulted into the saddle and dashed down the hill. A hundred yards away he stopped suddenly and called back, pointing to an opening between two patches of timber some miles to the south.

"Head 'em fer that openin' b'yond the tree in the neck o' the big flat. I'll join yu there," and he was soon going down the rocky slope like a bounding deer, darting to right and left around some brush and boulders, straight over others. Now he was out of sight in a declivity, and Ames looked beyond again to the herd in the flat below. Perkins was almost there,

his "bunch" heading straight and true at the herd. Eager was evidently coming toward the approaching band —no, he was turning back. "Perky's" charges were going into the waiting herd on the dead run and now—yes, the whole herd was on the move—running, every one, straight away across the flat to the east. Eager and two other cowboys were at the herd when it started, the break coming at a point between Eager and a cowboy unknown to Ames, a man riding a white horse. Now the white was running neck and neck with the leaders, but Eager, on the opposite side, seemed dropping back presently to cross behind the stampeding herd, then gradually to forge up along the opposite side. Now he was close to "Perky" and if Ames had been as close he would have heard one of the most thorough-going and spectacular, off-hand cussings that ever a blundering cowboy got from a righteously indignant and thoroughly infuriated "straw boss." He would have learned that handling a bunch of wild cattle was not the only phase of that life in which there was art and science. But this cussing didn't interfere with the business, for it all occurred while the two men raced through and over the dust-smeared, nodding sage-brush, alongside a stampeding herd of as wild cattle as ever tore up gravel on a range.

The business with Perkins being over for the time being, Eager was leading away again and Ames now noticed that all of the men were on the same side of the herd and that the puncher on the white horse was forcing the leaders around to the right. The other men worked in his trail along the side of the racing herd, now gradually breaking from mass formation into a long definite column.

"More art and more science," murmured Ames as he watched the cowboys hold that bunch of fright-maddened wild things being marshalled into line and manoeuvered into order and quiet. Now he could see a flying trail of dust shoot out into the open area from the fringe of pinion and cedar away below him. He

could scarcely bring himself to believe Ingle had covered the distance down that rolling brush-and-rock-covered slope in the time that had elapsed. A few minutes, and he saw Ingle slow down, stop a while, then turn and start back, evidently concluding that the boys below could handle the herd without his help. Ames observed that the herd, now well strung out, was in the form of a great letter J, as the skilled cowboys were actually forcing the runaways to double back on themselves.

Mounting the black bolly was the next problem that confronted Ames. He accomplished this successfully and got a new lesson, though not a severe one. As he rose to throw his leg across the saddle the black reared high, nearly going over backward, then jumping high in the air and striking and pawing wildly with his fore-feet. The saddle horses and "Old Blue" with the pack had straggled on down the trail and the black seemed disinclined to go. Keeping carefully alert, Ames sat talking to the animal in a low tone. Finally the black started forward on a run down the rough winding trail. Ames would have much preferred a straight bucking game, to this wild dash and the attendant risk of a fall. But, range-raised and sure-footed, the horse kept the trail and presently overtook the saddle horses, to his rider's great relief. Coming out of a fringe of timber a few minutes later, Ames saw Ingle heading across the country in a course gradually converging on his own. Meanwhile, down in the big saucerlike flat beyond, the herd of cattle was being "milled" round and round like some great varicolored, animate wheel, and from the north another "bunch" of wild cattle was running tangent to it with a cowboy skillfully veering them inward as Eager had done before. A few minutes later the whole herd, several hundred all told, began moving southward, one man riding ahead and the others on the sides and behind. Frequently one or several head would make a dash for freedom, but invariably a rider sprang to

frustrate the effort. Sometimes it was a race, but always the segment of a circle remained, the horseman on the outer side pressing, pressing the fugitives back into the herd.

Ingle now joined Ames, explaining that camp was some four or five miles on to the south, a long peninsular point between two deep impassable canyons on to which the herd could be held with one man to guard the neck. He called Ames' attention, further, to the fact that when one or more of the cattle made a breakaway when the herd was moving in a given direction it was always the man next behind who swung away to break the attempt, thus always forcing the runaway in the direction the herd was going. If the race was long enough to carry the runners past the next man ahead, that man's place was to drop back to close up the gap left by his comrade.

As they jogged on along the trail Ingle further explained the plan of each day's work, emphasizing the fact that when each man or pair of men scared up a number of cattle on the particular section of range assigned, the thing to do was to work them toward the appointed meeting place or "hold-up," planning the arrival as nearly as possible at the agreed time. Thus separate bands were thrown into one with several riders to hold them. When all were in, the herd was then moved to a place topographically such that only one or two men were required to hold any number of cattle.

CHAPTER X

ALL QUIET—NOT QUITE

THUS they chatted, Ames asking questions on any point not thoroughly understood, so that by the time they reached camp near sundown, he felt pretty thoroughly coached in the duties that would occupy his attention the following day and many days to come.

They reached camp a half hour or so ahead of the men with the cattle; the latter, when they had put the day's capture on the holding ground, came jogging into camp rough, rugged, sweat-streaked and dusty, but showing no evidence of weariness. Ames was introduced with the explanation that he was a "new hand." Ingle charitably refrained from any explanation as to just *how* new. Their horses had not been unsaddled and Ames' matter-of-fact handling of the black broncho as he unsaddled along with the rest of the men, served as his credentials, thanks again to the friendly scheming of the sagacious Ingle. The horses, unsaddled, were left to stand for a while to cool off and wait the arrival of the wrangler who would take them after being watered to their night feed-ground.

There was no attempt at order about the camp life. As soon as a man could dash sufficient water over face, neck, and hands to flush off the day's accumulation of dust and grime he clapped his hat on—to hold the mat of hair out of his eyes—and dived for the food. Half a camp-oven loaf or pone of bread, a generous slice of fried, boiled, or baked meat, a plate of fried or boiled potatoes or beans, a generous cup of coffee plentifully sugared but without milk or cream, and each man so supplied sat him down on any sort of seat, the usual attitude being Turk fashion, cross-legged on the ground, with plate on the booted feet between knees and coffee cup on the ground at one side or in front in the angle of the crossed shins. For

dessert it was more bread with canned or stewed dried fruit or a plate of molasses or syrup, more coffee, and more talk. Though in the saddle from near daylight it was against the etiquette, if not the ethics, of the cow-camp to carry lunch during the rodeo days; and "supper time" was whenever the men got back to camp. It was toward the latter part of the meal, therefore, before there was time for many words. The cook would take a skillet of meat, suspended from a pot-hook, in one hand and a huge pot of coffee in the other and go from man to man as looks or actions indicated the desire for replenishment of the respective plates and cups, but bread was passed like the sphere in a spanking game of basket ball, albeit the "pone" or cake-shaped loaf went whirling from hand to hand like well-pitched quoits.

The edge being now off the appetites, a little man over to one side concluded it was time to start conversation. His name might be anything—since in the only reference to him Ames had heard he had been designated "Lippy," a nickname probably due to the fact that he nearly always had the first and the last word on any subject.

"What's wrong with the world, now, Ingy?" he asked; that being his way of asking if there was any news from "the outside world." His theory evidently was that it wasn't *news* unless it was bad.

"Oh, nuthin' much," and Ingle was evidently cudgeling his mind for something to tell. "Boss got a little scare th' other day when he heard some fellers wuz lookin' over the country on the north end. Thought it wuz nesters comin', but it was only some perfessors come frum back east to look at the canyon from this side. He made every man jack uv us 'jist happen on to 'em 'un ask 'em their biz'ness, un pump 'em a while. B'lieve he's got 'Blackie' trailin' 'em yet."

"Say," said "Lippy" with a grin, "dam 'f I don't believe 'ut two covered wagons with a woman un a crate o' chickens in one uv 'em un a milk cow tied

'hind 'd simply scare the boss stiff," and the grin broke into a guffaw.

"Ye-ah," said another, through or over or around a mouthful of bread and syrup. "Jeh li' a rabbut scurs a kiote," and the speaker, a big, husky man, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand as he got to his feet. He rubbed both hands over a stomach that hung over his pants' band; and after a huge exhalation and a pat on his paunch, as though coaxing it to make room for a little more, he picked up his cup and reached for the coffee pot—either having made peace with his stomach or concluding to persecute it some more anyhow. While pouring the coffee he continued:

"On'y thing that'd go stiff 'ud be his upper lip, an' nobuddy an't never seen that saggin' none tu notice."

The big man acted as if he had been challenged to a debate on the subject, but "Lippy" was there with the voice if not with the logic.

"Yes, but a stiff-upper-lip ain't a fence frum 'Muggins Flat' to 'Buckskin Gulch'," he countered.

"Jake Frye's lip u'll come mighty damn nigh bein' a fence 'f anybuddy inquires uv yuh!" The big man's glare was withering, but "Lippy" was already withered, and so could not very well shrivel up any more.

"Lacks a hell-uv-a sight of bein' a 'lawful fence,' if anybuddy inquires uv yuh!" mocked the little man, who, because his smallness of stature made him immune from force, had acquired a manner of speaking that could be very irritating.

"And," he went on undaunted, "those Mormons is not so slow at findin' out whut the law is."

The big man was getting wrought up. He looked at Lippy as a big mastiff would size up a fice and conclude that there wasn't enough to bite, then he took out a huge knife, opened a great dirk-like blade, and —picked his teeth.

"Ye-eh," he said with sarcasm sharp as the knife. "Le' ough o' then dan Nornons sti' ih danned heah."

The knife blade wedged between the speaker's teeth

as he spoke had spoiled the effect of the sarcasm. Lippy was laughing at him instead of being cowed. Taking the knife from between his teeth, therefore, and pointing its glistening point straight at the little man, "Kittle Belly," as "Lippy" and some of the others called him among themselves, went back to the first and said it all over—with variations.

"You know what I said," he fumed. "You jes' let one o' them damned Mormons—er a hull pack uv 'em fer's that goes—stick th'r damn head over this mountain—er leastwise stick a plow in this here dirt—un he'll never know whut time it wuz when he started back."

Now it was "Lippy's" turn to *tower*—and he did it,—four feet nine and seven-eighths inches—including two inches of boot-heel and three inches of hat—notwithstanding the fact that "Kittle Belly's" big, ugly knife was pointed straight at the fleck of sticky gum under his left eye that the hasty cold water ablution of a few moments ago had failed to remove. "Lippy" was —well, you couldn't describe "Lippy's" state of mind. Brimstone and bristling steel, burnt powder and blue smoke, were in his manner. His looks were—well, just what they were. He didn't choke nor swallow. Just spat it right out!

"My—good—hell —a'mighty,—man!" The words gathered force as they came; and Ames held his breath for the forceful finish.

"Put yer hat over *it*, somebuddy, 'fore it busts an' musses up the kitchen," shouted Eager, and everybody laughed, albeit two of the number were slow in getting started.

"Now, ain't that fierce!" this from Ingle as the laugh was subsiding. "Nobuddy won't never know whut 'Lippy' wuz goin' to say. I bet a millyun dollars un a mule colt he don't know—hisself."

"I bet it 'ud a squashed 'Hud' all right," said another. "He wuz jist ready tu drop when Eager shet off the swellin' tide o' righteous wrath."

"Better git away f'm 'Lippy,' 'Perk,' 'e might blow up yit, shettin' im off sudden like that," some one else suggested, "nobuddy knows whut's inside o' him—"

"Yes they do!" put in the cook.

The laugh that ensued ended the raillery for the time being, Lippy having the last word.

"If anybuddy wants to say I ain't payin' fer whut I eat—why—"

During the portentous pause the plans for the morrow's work were taken up. Everyone agreed that with the fresh horses brought by Ames and Ingle the time was ripe to try to "clean the angle," a rough, rugged area where the Grand Canyon begins to break through the great Kiabab Plateau. From the talk Ames made up his mind that it would be the crucial test day for him.

While the question as to the most suitable place for the "hold-up" was under discussion, "Lippy" was reminded of an incident of the day and came very near "starting something" again.

"Whut throwed 'the snakes' into 'em over there t'day, jist 'fore my bunch come out o' the cedars?" he asked.

Eager sat on the ground with his hands locked 'round his knees, hat-brim low over his nose, his eyes on the thin place on the toe of his left boot. At Lippy's query two men—the two who were with the herd when "The snakes" put in appearance, looked at Eager.

"Bone," said the 'Straw Boss' with just a tinge of disgust, whereupon the two men glanced at Perkins, and Lippy knew all about it. Ames was surprised that so much could be said in one significantly intoned word and two glances. Ingle charitably pulled the conversation back on the track and started it going.

"How 'bout Saucer Flat?" he asked, adding after a pause, "It isn't in the middle but they's no op'nin that is, an b'sides 'f any of 'em gits away we c'n boo 'em into Saddle Canyon un one man on the trail kin hold 'em frum comin' out."

The matter was discussed pro and con and Ingle's suggestion finally adopted, whereupon the men began preparations to "turn in."

They slept mostly in pairs. Ames looked at Ingle, who led the way to their pack, pulled the bedding out flat on the ground where it lay, sat down on it, stuck the toe of his right boot in the angle under the flexed knee of the left leg, grasped the heel with one hand, and grunted slightly as he tugged at the snug fitting boot.

Soon there were four different kinds of snore in the camp. Ames noticed it because his bed "fit too quick" as "Lippy" would have put it—or didn't fit at all, only in spots. Ingle's snore was endurable, being only a purring gurgle, but down the other side of the big service-berry bush there was a—no, it wasn't a duet, it was a contest. Two sleeping punchers seemed to be disagreeing both as to tone and cadence.

"Gur-r-u-ruck" one of them would say, whereupon the other would come back in a determined "coo-o-o-we-eep" with a sudden rising inflection at the last.

"No such thing, 'Gur-ru-uck's' the only respectable snore from a grown-up man," the other seemed to contend.

"For an Indian, you mean. 'Coo-oo-e-eep's' the only simon-pure, civilized snore."

"Oh, take that back to the girl's boardin' school, the place it was tuned-up for, but 'gur-r-r-ruck,' if yer pretendin' to be a full-grown, *he* man," the basso persisted.

As the contest progressed it became apparent that it was not in the same bed, and Ames felt satisfied that the big, gruff "gr-r-r-uck" came from "Kittle-Belly." It just fitted him. As to the "coo-oo-oo-weep" Ames imagined "Lippy" the probable exponent of the boarding school end of the argument, now distinguished to come from nearer the commissary department.

"Gur-umph!" —Whoa! Something had gone wrong with Kittle Belly.

"Fer hell sake, Lippy," came the gruff voice of one "Pud" from down below the big service-berry, "shet that off a few draws un let a feller git a wink or two start."

"Well, yuh don't need to cave a man's ribs in to wake 'im up, do yuh?" was Lippy's irritated and sleepy retort. "I thought the mountain 'ud tipped over on me."

"So 'd I," growled Pud, "un you'se tryin' tu swaller it hull."

From farther up the slope came an audible snicker. Some one else had heard the nocturnal vaudeville, but over toward the grub boxes, "Coo-oo-oo-eep," the girl's boarding school contestant, was sawing peacefully along alone.

CHAPTER XI

WHERE THE GODS LEFT OFF

FINALLY, when Pud had gotten his "few winks start" and Lippy had steam up and was threatening to race away after the contestant of the commissary department, Ames began to take stock and check up on the past results and future prospects. He felt sure that Ingle's friendship was reliable, and that Mr. Frye's attitude the morning previous evidenced an inclination to friendliness, or at least approval of his course with the Mexican and later with Mr. Frye himself. Of the ins and outs of broncho-busting and cow-punching Ames had learned more in thirty-six hours—thanks to Ingle's good offices and some fortunate circumstances —than he had supposed possible in as many weeks. His introduction into the present environment was satisfactory with the possible exception that Ingle's foresightedness in having him ride the black broncho into camp had put him to some disadvantage if the "Straw Boss," Mr. Eager, should presume upon his being an experienced hand. He did not worry about this last because he felt that he could trust to Ingle's friendship and ingenuity to keep him from being too severely involved on that account. He had followed every word and noted every expression of the men for evidence of state of mind or manifest attitude toward the company's policy regarding control of the range. The colloquy between Lippy and he of the overhanging stomach had shown that there was a division of sentiment in camp. Just how the other boys lined up on the matter he had yet to find out, but the incident had given him a suggestion which he hoped would prove valuable. On the whole Ames felt that progress was all that might be expected.

There was a yell, followed by a pistol-shot, and Ames sprang up excitedly. Ingle was seated on the side of

the bed pulling on his boots. A man was striding down the hill past their bed, and down below the service-berry bush there was commotion of some kind. Ames was thoroughly excited at first, but he observed a bright campfire burning, in the glare of which the cook was working unconcernedly. The man that had strode down the hill straddled the small creek below camp and began washing his hands and face. Looking towards the east Ames now discerned that it was coming daylight and off to the south he could hear the wrangle-jangle of a bell on a rapidly driven horse. Looking sheepishly around he satisfied himself that no one had noticed his manner. He felt relieved when Ingle stood up, threw his arms up and outward without looking around, and yawned heavily. Piling his mop of hair on the top of his head, he clapped his hat on, and turned and smiled.

"Rest some?" he asked, leaving Ames up against the choice of admitting that he didn't know it if he had, or that he wasn't sure that he hadn't.

Ames was saved from answering by Lippy, who dashed out from behind the bush tugging at a rope. Ames soon learned this was looped and half-hitched several times around a roll of bedding in the center of which was Pud, ruthlessly robbed of another "Two or three winks."

"Oh, yes! oh, yes!" shouted the cook, and began pouring coffee while the men who were ready picked up plates, forks, spoons, et cetera—mostly et cetera—and the new day was in full swing.

The jingle-jangle of the horse bell came nearer and nearer and before the men were through the meal the saddle horses were in and had drunk their fill. Ingle saved Ames the humiliation of roping his own mount, and made a selection of the best horse assigned to Ames' "string" which, upon the assumption that the new man was "old" to the business, was better than usually assigned to a new hand. It was a bright day and Ingle directed Ames to bring his bridle—intimating

that he had absent-mindedly caught "Rat," formerly one of his own string.

The moment the men were in the saddle discussion of the day's plans was resumed. They were to ride high and force the cattle down from the brushy slopes of the mountain and through the thicker growth of cedars and scrub pine to the more open country toward the edge of the Grand Canyon.

A few miles from camp, Eager began disposing of his men in ones and twos, with instructions as to the particular range they were to scour and the approximate time they were to meet at "Saucer Flat." Kittle-Belly, who in his presence was referred to as "Hud" or Hudman was, on account of his bulk, given the inside circle or "short ride." Next came Pud, then Perk, and so on, Ames finding his assigned position between Lippy and Ingle, the latter taking the long swing. Eager had dropped back without any definite declaration of his intentions.

Until Lippy had dropped out on his assignment the conversation dealt with details of what was to be done and about certain alternatives that might be resorted to in case of the failure of original plans. One thing Ames had particularly noted was the frequent reference to staying with the "mav'ricks" and the "long-ears." When alone with Ingle Ames began to ply him with questions, eliciting the information that "mavericks" and "long-ears" were unbranded and unmarked cattle, a condition due to their having been overlooked in former "roundups" owing to roughness or dense cover of the range and their extreme wildness. Ingle pointed out the advisability of not forcing the cattle too rapidly but keeping just close enough to keep them headed in the right direction.

They rode together well upon a rib of the mountain from which a general view of the field of the day's operations was visible, and from which vantage point Ingle pointed out "Saucer Flat." Above them the mountain side was spotted

with remnants of the winter's snow with some well defined drifts on the north slopes of the ridges. Signs of cattle were noticeable now and then, and back the way they had come they saw a dozen head skulking up the side of the ridge well up against the snow.

A moment or two later Lippy was seen "riding their tracks." Ingle fired two rapid shots from his 'Colts,' whereupon Lippy stopped and gazed in their direction. Firing again, Ingle walked his horse along the top of the ridge. Lippy was three quarters of a mile away and lower down the mountain, across two canyons to the north. Presently a puff of smoke shot up above his head and an instant later the pop of his gun sounded. Ingle wig-wagged something with his hat and Lippy turned and spurred over the ridge out of their sight. Ames could not refrain from asking what message had been sent.

"Motioned him to circle," said Ingle, manifestly amused at Ames' open-eyed wonderment, "un he knows that means he's clost to 'em un now he's makin' a sneak to get above 'em."

The cattle had stopped in a clump of brush in a small ravine on the side of the ridge, and Ames was surprised that they could so effectively conceal themselves in so meagre a screen. After a few moments Lippy could be seen on top of the ridge, straight beyond the hiding cattle. Ames watched his companion closely for more signals. Ingle waved his hat again, motioning the distant rider to go further up the hill, but Lippy didn't seem to get the signal. A moment later Ingle turned his horse up the slope and Lippy did the same, only Ingle rode slowly while the other seemed to hurry. When Lippy was well above the cattle, Ingle turned his own horse sharply to the left and the distant "puncher" did the same. Coming a few hundred yards toward them down the face of the hill Lippy halted—evidently for further signal. Ingle motioned with his hat, but the signal not being effective he turned and looked southward.

"That ridge is higher'n we are so he can't see the signals," he said, and moved his horse slowly eastward down the slope. Instantly the watching man on the distant ridge did the same and shortly came into view of the brushy declivity where the fugitives were hiding. Here he stopped.

"Got 'm," said Ingle. "Le's beat it."

As they turned and began to drop down the slope southward, they observed a "bunch" of running cattle in the edge of a small opening and still closer in the thick cedars a moving cloud of dust.

"Boys is stirrin' 'em up some," observed Ingle.

A moment later he stopped and pointed downward to the right at the bottom of the canyon into which they were descending.

"See that little cedar below the clump o' quaken-asps?" he said. Ames nodded. "Well," he went on, "jist fer a little practice le's see who can git there first."

"What—?" Ames' astonishment gave way to sudden determination; he struck spurs to his horse rather more forcibly than was necessary and dashed after the flying Ingle. Now it was straight over the top of a wild crab-apple bush, then a dart around a taller service-berry, two jumps farther to duck under the branches of a leaning maple, then crash into a clump of mountain laurel so thick that it seemed the horse's feet must surely be tangled and the animal thrown rolling to the bottom of the canyon. Now the course was not so brushy, but small stones covered the ground profusely. Surely a horse could not run through them and not fall. Ames pulled hard on the reins, but to his surprise and almost to his consternation the animal, if anything, gathered speed. Another clump of laurel and—heavens! Just beyond it, right where the horse would surely hit the next bound, a bare sloping rock at the very lower edge of which lay a snag of a half burned scraggly pinyon. Ames grabbed the saddle horn with both hands. Ca-whif! That fool horse sprang straight for the treacherous rock and—no, he

was clearing it, but that snag, Ames gasped—was beneath—no, behind him! The horse had cleared both and was still on all fours and running all the faster from the momentum of that down-grade hurdle. Two hundred feet ahead Ingle was reining in and with feigned unconcern looked ahead, charitably giving the discomfited and panic stricken Ames time to get his feet in the uselessly dangling stirrups and gather up his bridle reins. When Ames had had time to regain some semblance of composure Ingle turned.

"Well," he said, very matter-of-fact, "you made that little dash O.K." Ames went red in the face as he brazenly tried to smile and say, "Oh, yes," as matter-of-fact as Ingle had spoken. He felt chagrined and justly rebuked when Ingle calmly went on to state that the admonition "down in yer stirrups un lean back" applied to the case of down-hill dashes as well as to straight or fancy bucking and that the horse "wanted a tight rein to brace against, but his head must not be held high." Ames there and then vowed not to lie to, nor in any manner again try to deceive, a man with eyes in the back of his head. Moreover, he felt like riding up and deliberately hugging the man with the charity and sense to administer a deserved rebuke so effectively, yet so tactfully. What a spectacle he must have presented as that nimble, sure-footed veteran of the range bore him safely down the rugged slope, reins and stirrups both dangling loose and wild, with both his hands frantically hanging on to the fork of his saddle, and every joint in him stiff and rigid as the "forked stick" of which they had spoken before! Surely this frontier cowboy was possessed of a mantle of charity that could cover a multitude of sins and ignore—nay, wisely note and kindly correct,—a mountain of blunders. And who would have thought that any man would find on wild western ranges the very essence of what true culture aims to produce?

While Ingle got off his horse and drank copiously

from the rill that rippled down the bottom of the canyon, Ames brought himself to the conclusion that, in justice to his friend, and possibly his own future welfare, he must some way let Ingle know that he appreciated his kind consideration. He knew he must not make it too sentimental.

"You certainly fixed me up with a splendid mount this morning, Jim," he ventured.

"They don't make 'em no better," was the rejoinder.

"He knows the business all right," said Ames, "and I can plainly see that if we don't do our share today he can certainly blame me for the failure. I can just imagine now the feeling of amusement—or more probably the disgust—he must already have for me the way I rode him down that side hill."

The two men looked into each other's eyes, and Ames was sure nothing more need be said. They separated fifteen minutes later on the top of the next ridge, Ingle's final admonition being to "Let Ol' Rat have purty much his own way when you jump up any cattle. Down hill an' in the roughs just 'magine he's gonna buck with you and set 'im like yu did the yeller over 't th' ranch tuther day un he'll come put nigh doin' the rest. Well, s' long. I gotta drift some to make my swing." Ingle rose in his stirrups and leaned over the pommel of his saddle as his horse struck a swinging trot around the mountain side to the south.

Ames was to remain on the ridge where he was and study carefully the topography of the country until Ingle topped the second ridge to the south. Then he was to begin to work eastward down the slope, forcing the cattle into the lower country and then beat back-and-forth through the cedars to force them out into the more open country still farther eastward, edging everything toward Saucer Flat.

"Don't go out into the flat until you see some of the other men—two at least," had been Ingle's advice.

"One man," the cowboy had said, "jist as well try to hold up the wind as a bunch o' these outlaws. Keep

above 'em until you see a nuther feller er two shovin' some out o' the timber, then push 'em out in the open un there's where you gotta use yer head un yer horse. Soon's they git the idear they's a hold-up intended, they're gonna bust fer the timber agin un you un Rat's bizness u'll be to see 'ut they don't git there. Don't crowd 'em too close but see to it that yer right in the way every time, un keep 'em on a swing, till you'n one er two others mill yer bunches together into one bunch."

Ames pondered and rehearsed these suggestions for a time as he studied the country. Directly below him the mountain slope was bare of snow, but above, it was spotted with drifts of snow; still higher up it was nearly all white except for the dark green of the yellow pine timber on the slopes and the denser stands of spruce in the canyons and ravines. Below him the large timber was almost entirely absent. But the slopes were covered with a sort of chaparral, nearly bare at the foot, breaking into a thin strip of sage-covered bench, then abruptly into the rather dense stand of scrub pine and cedar. These again gradually gave way to a sage-covered expanse with more or less of the scrubby timber lessening in proportion on toward the great gorge that marked the course of the Colorado river. Beyond the gorge lay the Painted Desert, slashed and gashed by deep gulches leading into the main chasm.

Attention to duty prevented Ames from dwelling long on this most wonderful view, which, including the terraces of white and vermillion sand-stone to the north, the weird shapes and groupings of the pinnacles on the plateau northeastward, and the great bare, gray clay domes and ridges beyond, is not excelled for variety of color and topographic arrangement anywhere in the whole wide world. It is a scene defying description and hence only to be appreciated by those fortunate enough to behold it. Through Ames' mind flitted the vague fragment of a dream—of a home that

should look down upon this wild but awe-inspiring sweep of varicolored and variformed fragments. It was as though here creative forces had abandoned their experimental laboratory and forgot to clean house, or, having finished their work, had dumped from mighty caldrons the residue of all materials used.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT "BOOTS" IT

TO the south Ames could now see Ingle riding up the face of the mountains across the next canyon, and—yes, several hundred yards to the right, stealthily skulking through the big brush, were several head of cattle. If Ingle knew of their presence he gave no sign; and Ames discerned that there would his first real work as a cowboy have its beginning. On top of the ridge Ingle halted and looked back. As he was on the sky-line Ames could distinctly see him motioning with his hat westward and down toward the skulking cattle. Ames gave signal that he had also located the stragglers, and Ingle disappeared over the ride beyond. Twenty minutes later he was on the next ridge and this time turned and rode along its top some little distance. Remembering the signal to Lippy, Ames felt certain that his friend wanted to tell him there were cattle in the second canyon also. Accordingly, as he had observed Lippy do, he mounted and rode westward up the slope. Seeing this, Ingle dropped out of sight down the other side of the ridge.

Ames, following Lippy's tactics, kept up the ridge and out of sight of the hiding cattle until sure he was well above them. Then he dropped into the canyon and came directly toward their hiding place. When within some two hundred yards of the place and the cattle did not break out, he had about concluded they were not so wild as he had supposed. Going still closer he spied a white spot and felt sure they were there; still closer, and he saw a head lowered; half a minute later, evidently satisfied they were discovered, they shot from cover and dashed down the canyon. The saddle horse nearly sprung from under Ames, who suddenly recalled Ingle's suggestion to "set him like he did the yeller over at the ranch." It was a good

time to recall the injunction for just then "Rat" went sheer over the top of a mat of mountain laurel, landing twenty feet down the hill. There was a pair of stirrups dangling uselessly and "them dam' knees," refactory as ever, were forcefully if not frantically squeezing a horse's sides. Ames was utterly disgusted and thoroughly angry at himself. Chucking his feet abruptly into the stirrups, he sat as he had on the mustang and checked the horse, recalling Ingle's suggestion "not to crowd 'em."

Once checked, the horse seemed to get the idea and settled down to an alert, springy walk. The cattle were now out of sight down the winding canyon. After following them for some minutes and seeing their tracks straight on down the canyon, Ames was considering the advisability of swinging round the side-hill with a view to working up the ridge to ferret out those Ingle had indicated were in the other canyon. Suddenly the horse nearly bounded from beneath him again, and started at top speed around the side of the mountain in the opposite direction from where Ames had been thinking of going. Ames saw a white spot bobbing through the brush about an eighth of a mile ahead and working gradually up on the ridge from which he had discovered the cattle in the first place. The horse seemed to know those cattle should not go up that mountain and proposed to see that they didn't. The same idea at last struck Ames and made him angry with himself for his stupidity. From that time on he was something of a cowboy—he and Rat together. His disgust at his proneness to forget all his good advice and past experience kept Ames keyed up to the point where he rode as he should; before the cattle could make the top of the ridge he was above them, forcing them back into the bottom of the canyon. A few rods down the canyon and they took the hill on the opposite side. Keeping above them, Ames let them swing 'round on the other side of the ridge. There, from on top, he saw them dash into a patch of

brush but not come out. Noting the place, he left them there and went on up the ridge to a point he thought was above any cattle, being nearly at the edge of the snow where the shrubbery was barely beginning to leaf. Dropping into the canyon he was surprised to see fresh tracks of running cattle going on up the trail. This meant that he must take the ridge and make another "sneak." Part way up he discovered the cattle hiding. Thinking to save some time and also because he feared a dash up the canyon, he intended to swerve out of sight before they could start. He was too late. The bunch broke from cover and the bottom of the canyon being smoother than the mountain side they nearly outran him. It was a quarter of a mile before he passed them. Forgetting the injunction not to get too close he dropped into the canyon close ahead of them. To his surprise, and almost his consternation, they did not stop. Looking back he noted that an old, long horned cow, an unbranded two-year-old bull, and a staggy old steer, were not at all disposed to stop. The canyon was rapidly getting steeper and rougher. Smooth, sloping rock on each side made it virtually impossible for a horse to get out either way, especially a burdened and winded one. Ames was un-armed and a hundred yards farther up a ledgy reef ran directly across the canyon and the three animals had had just enough of a run to want to fight. Clearly they were what Ingle had spoken of as "on the prod," and one of the best horses on the ranch was directly in their path and badly winded from the long up-hill run. Ames decided to get off and fight for the straining horse, but he decided to take the horse up as far as possible into the slide rock at the end of the obstructing ledge. Up, one rod—two—the horse was striving to the utmost. Ames sprang off. The straining horse made another rod—stopped and began sliding with the loose rocks his weight was dislodging, a sort of steep bed of coarse shale. Ames caught and steadied him; and with this assistance the horse held himself and

braced his hind feet and dropped to his knees in front. The young bull, too fat for the ascent, had stopped, but the steer and the cow were coming on with stiffened necks and fierce, determined eyes.

Stepping below the horse, Ames snatched up a good-sized stone in each hand and waited. At the foot of the slide he hoped the infuriated beasts would stop. But no, the steer forged ahead. Heaving a stone with all his might, Ames missed both and cursed himself for his carelessness. He had thrown at both and, of course, had hit neither. Quickly he let go the other stone and hit the cow so near the eye that she turned and stood below the steer, still straining to come on. Luckily stones were plentiful and handy, and the bombardment the steer received was truly terrific. But he persisted in coming up the slide a short way, only to be knocked staggering back.

Ca-bish!—his nose was bleeding. Crack! The shell of one horn was loose and blood was oozing at its butt. Ames was sure that would get him, as he bumped back against the cow. But no, he was coming again. Ames tried again for that same horn but hit a hind foot instead. The steer kicked the cow behind and below him a resounding whack in the ribs, whirled as though he were attacked from the rear and hopped off down the canyon. Ames was congratulating himself that it was over, when, to his amazement, the cow, evidently resenting the kick and rightly placing the blame, came scrambling up through that slide rock and, thanks to the brief rest, making pretty good headway. Ames' feelings were hurt. He stood with his feet wide apart and his hands twitching. He was angry. So was Madam Cow.

"Come to think about it, this is Leap Year" said Ames through clenched teeth. "Ladies' choice, sure enough! All right, old girl," and he seized the cow by one horn and the nose. "Swing your partners," he shouted, ending with a grunt as he wrenched upon the nose and down on the horn. Before he could twist

enough to throw the cow on her side she settled down on her haunches and tipped over backward down the steep slope, by the sudden change of motion taking the surprised Ames with her as she went. When they stopped rolling Ames had the cow in his lap—that is, enough of her to make him know that it was no padded seat he was enjoying and in his mind he had a problem. He wondered which weighed the heavier. He smiled as he thought of the Nigger who wanted help to let go of the bear.

"You're on top, Old Gal." he said, "so I reckon it's your first move. Your miserable temper has sort of set me agin ye, so I can't say I like your society even. I'm not nearly so badly stuck on you as you intended if you could have just gotten a horn into me, but I will be stuck on that sharp rock I'm sitting on if it keeps boring into me."

He looked down the canyon to see if the other members of the family were gone.

"I was just thinking," he said, again addressing the cow, "that this might make trouble for me. If your 'old man' should take a peek, he'd likely be very much scandalized and make it hot for me—or get a divorce from you. So won't you please get up and go about your business—or go and make it right with your family? I never invited you up here—you know I didn't."

All the while Ames was scheming and planning how to get the cow off his legs and still keep sufficient advantage to prevent harm. He called to his horse, but 'Rat' politely refused to become involved in the flirtation. Finally, however, the horse got his front feet under him and began backing down the hill, stopping just eighteen inches out of reach. By constant working, not without some discomfort from the rocks under him, Ames had accomplished enough to assure himself that he could "get from under," but there was still the problem of getting on board in time to escape injury to either himself or the horse. Taking

a lesson from the Mexican's brutal handling of the black horse, he kept the cow's horns to the ground and her nose elevated, slacking occasionally to let her struggle and afford him opportunity gradually to withdraw his legs from beneath her. At last he felt that with one more effort one foot would be free. Sure enough, as the cow struggled again he twisted partially around and gave a sudden forceful tug on his right leg and that foot was free. But the boot had stayed under the beast's shoulder.

"I beg your pardon, Madam," said the disgusted Ames, "don't be alarmed. I left that boot under you, of course, to keep the rocks from hurting you, but I very much hope it won't be necessary to leave the other one there."

He was now on his left knee. The boot from that foot was still under the cow, but with the brace he could get with the free foot he lifted the animal's head and foreparts and freed his other foot. Now, using his feet to pinion the beast's horns, he could stand and barely touch the horse and was just on the point of stepping on the cow in a sudden spring for the horse, when it occurred to him that the horse was facing the wrong way. He was still above the cow and thereby in danger if he failed to turn before the cow could get up. Taking firm hold of the cow, he threw pebbles at the horse until he had forced him into a better position to spring aboard. He had to step over or on the cow to do so. He did the latter, and as he sprang the booted foot slipped on the animal's skin, and he dived headlong at the astonished horse, which jumped several feet away. Scrambling to his feet with the half-formed question whether to grab the cow again or chase the horse, he glanced over his shoulder, and saw the cow was still stretched out on the ground. He made for the horse, vaulted into the saddle, and was several rods down the canyon before hazarding another look to see what the cow was doing. She was still on the ground struggling and he wondered if she

might be seriously injured. Hesitating a moment, he rode cautiously back to investigate and concluded after a few moment's observation that she didn't get up because her back was down hill. He'd have to roll her over. Estimating that his lasso would reach from the cow to a small tree that stood on top of a little ledge just above, he turned and rode the horse to a place of safety on the hillside some distance away. Returning on foot, he put the rope on both the cow's hind feet, climbed up to the tree on the ledge, and, after tugging for some time succeeding in rolling the cow over. She scrambled up, kicked off the rope, and dashed down the canyon with his boot flying after her. The spur rowel had caught in the bush of her tail.

"Oh, I see," said Ames. "Mrs. Potiphar's going to tell the old man, and so she takes along the evidence." He sat down and laughed. In a minute, however, he sprang up with a startled look on his face. That boot would come in pretty handy while he was riding this rough range and it would be a good idea to see what that fool cow did with it. Scrambling down off the rocks, he picked up his lariat and went limping and hopping down the canyon.

CHAPTER XIII

A NUMBER OF THINGS

MUCH relieved to find the boot caught in some brush a short distance below, Ames hastened to his horse and dashed away after the cattle. Possibly because they had seen Ingle going south, the cattle swung around the mountain northward and almost ran into the covert of the other band. None of them seemed inclined to go down the mountain and probably would not have done so but for Rat's speed, sure-footedness, and good sense. When they saw that the man and horse persistently kept above them, they at last gave up the fight and dashed away across the opening at the foot of the mountain, into the cedars below. Ames was just going into the timber too, when, glancing to the left, he was surprised to see part of the cattle had suddenly doubled back. A touch of the rein and the alert saddle horse also saw what was up. A rather sharp, rocky point ran out just south of a small "draw" or canyon leading back into the mountain. Ames was not sure he could cross it and drop into the draw ahead of the cattle. The alternative was to beat them in a nearly straight-away race, and he did beat them, all but a long, lanky, white cow. All the others, preferring the timber to the open, veered and went back into the cedars. Fifty yards on and the draw was a mass of dark green-foliaged brush with but one opening. Into this the cow darted, and noting a place at one side where the brush was smaller, Ames steered for that. He noticed the horse hesitate, but a touch of the spurs and the faithful horse responded. As he approached the brush he went into the air as though he aimed to jump a half-acre of them at a bound, alighting well over into the mass the first leap. Ames thought all the fighting cats in the universe had pounced on him at once. But for his

leather chaps, heavy denim jumper, and leather gauntlets, he was sure he would have been torn to pieces. As it was he couldn't be sure of extricating himself. The horse thrashed on a leap or two and came to a small opening leading to the left and up the hill. This he took and Ames saw a white streak shoot into the next thicket, but he did not choose to follow. Instead, he let Rat choose the course along the hillside. The cow had the trail and smoother going, but the saddle horse didn't propose to let the cow get away. He was heroically holding his own in spite of the handicap when, bounding high to clear a bush, he struck squarely on a smooth, steeply sloping rock that had been screened. No footing there, he could not spring. However, the momentum carried him on sharply down the hill, and he fell headlong into a bed of laurel. Ames went farther and, springing up, saw his poor horse lying in the mass of brush, back down-hill and head doubled under.

"Neck broken, of course," said Ames forlornly, but concluded that he would pull the horse into more respectable shape for his final breath. Accordingly he took hold of the tail and swung down the hill. The animal rolled over, slid a yard or two down off the sloping brushes, then sprang to his feet, pricked his ears forward as he looked for the fugitive cow, and,—yes, sir, he was certainly going on. Running to him Ames started to vault into the saddle, but nearly missed, the impatient animal being under fair speed before Ames could pull himself to a position in the saddle. It was rods farther before he found the right stirrup. Ames knew the cow was too far ahead now to be headed off and the only alternative was to follow until conditions were opportune for "a sneak." Consequently, they took the trail and followed, overtaking the speedy racer away up in the edge of the snow. Seeing she was pursued and too wise to crowd too far up into the snow, the brute turned along the mountain side to the north. By negotiating some snow drifts

Ames got above her and she started down the next ridge, the horseman following. Shortly she darted to the left again and shot downward for the bottom of the next canyon. Sure now that she was a long-ear and hence without brands, Ames dashed to head her off. Through a fringe of timber they went and, to the surprise of both of them evidently, straight down the steep northern slope into a snow drift, deep but now soft and mushy from the warm May sun. The cow struggled bravely down the drift, and assuming that she was going on through, the green cowboy took her trail and wallowed after. When well down into the drift it seemed doubtful if either would get through. The cow stopped, looked back and tried to wallow on, but couldn't make it, and began trying to turn around. Ames started to laugh at the effort and stopped—she was about to accomplish the turn—she had—and was wallowing back along her own trail. Ames tried to turn the horse, which, being heavier than the cow, sank deeper into the snow. Ames got off and tried to pull the horse around. It would be too late. The cow was nearly there—red-eyed and plainly meaning business. Hurriedly taking his lariat from the saddle he started to meet the cow, when the snow broke under him and he was down to his hips. He lurched down toward the laboring, vicious brute, then sidewise climbed on top of the snow and went down again. To crawl alligator-like was possible, he found; so he dived down the slope parallel to the trail and one arm went down so far into the snow as he tried to brace for the stop, that before he could paw himself out the cow's breath was in his face. Before he could get his rope over her head he was smeared with the drool from her panting mouth and nostrils, but the snow was too deep for her to lunge. She could only shake a vicious head and splatter the drivel over him. At any rate he could now save the horse from harm and,—yes, he had actually lassoed a wild cow—a "long-ear" but under the circumstances that showed more courage

than skill. Sixty feet down, the drift played out, and across about the same distance of soft bare ground was another fringe of timber. Ames looked at this longingly, but concluded he wouldn't take the chance. He must pull and coax the cow away from the horse. When she was a good rod from her trail down through the drift he left her with her head again down hill and away from the horse, crawled to where she had turned back, and tramped the trail on to the edge of the drift. This completed, he wallowed up to the horse and led him down opposite the cow. Then, picking up the end of the lasso, he mounted and, taking a goodly number of wraps around the horn of the saddle, tipped Madam Whitie over endwise and proceeded to drag her down the drift on her side, the sleek haired cow sliding easily on the snow. Down out of the snow, he dropped his rope and, before the cow was on her feet, was a couple of hundred feet away out of sight behind a tree holding his breath and wishing his horse would do the same. When the cow trotted off down the hill he followed after her wondering how he was ever going to get that rope. Down the hill farther he stopped and let his horse drink, loosening the cinch, as he understood was proper, for that purpose. Mounting again, he took up the trail of the "long-ear." Ten minutes later he scared her out of some brush where she had tried to hide. Noticing the rope sliding over the brush, Ames concluded to dash up and grab it and take a chance on pulling the beast down to the foot of the hill and tying her. It was rather more difficult than he had expected, but he finally succeeded in getting hold of the rope as it dragged over the brush. When he felt he had sufficient turns around the horn he reined in his horse, which braced and stopped but Ames and the saddle kept on going—for awhile. After the horse had drunk Ames had mounted without re-cinching. He rode the saddle along a few bumps and looked back to see Rat calmly cropping a bunch of grass and the bridle strung out on the ground in front

of him, the saddle having shoved it off as it slid over the horse's ears. The saddle went bobbing over the brush for several rods until the rope came loose. Ames stood up and looked around, sucked in his breath and, with great vehemence, called himself a name that he'd fight any other man in the world for calling him. Along with it went a bunch of adjectives that would have to be disinfected before going out in decent company again.

Picking up the bridle he started for the horse.

"Say, old boy," he said, grimly addressing the horse, "you old quadrupeds miss a lot by not having a sense of humor." And again, after a pause, "But then, there'd be danger of your laughing yourselves to death, so maybe it's just as well."

Saddling, he rode to the brow of a little ridge and saw the white cow nearly a quarter of a mile away, swinging around the point into the canyon up which he had previously chased her. Riding across the ridge higher up he cut her off, and near the mouth of the canyon picked up the trailing rope, this time with better results. He had dragged the brute out below the thicket of "cat-claws" when he saw Eager coming toward him. Eager's face showed satisfaction.

"Good work," he called as he rode up. "We've tried fer that ol' bitch ever time we been in here fer three years. Where'd you jump 'er up?"

"Up the next canyon south," said Ames in a matter-of-fact way. "Chased her clear up into the snow drifts and over the ridge and down this draw."

Roping her by both hind feet and throwing her to the ground, Eager directed Ames to get off and remove his own rope. Ames would have liked to be excused, but could not well say so. Accordingly he did as directed. The cow tried to get up, but Eager's well trained horse kept the rope taut and when Ames was again on Rat, Eager directed him to ride off south some two hundred yards, then, when the cow had ceased her struggles, he quietly dropped his rope and

rode back into the mouth of the canyon. Soon she got up, stood and stared first at one and then at the other, then turned and trotted eastward with Eager in pursuit, and Ames saw no more of either until an hour or so later when, having forced several bands of cattle out of the cedars, he saw Eager helping with the round-up in the edge of the flat. Later when the herd had been milled into semblance of order and was beginning to trail toward camp, Eager and another man galloped off. They shortly returned partly dragging and partly driving a large, lanky, white cow, freshly marked and branded. Throwing her again, the herd was made to circle almost entirely around her, held in place by the one man, when she was allowed to get up and join the procession.

That night toward the close of about the best meal Ames had eaten in his whole life, when the conversational stage was reached, Lippy led off as usual.

"Who brought in Ol' Whitie today?" he asked, looking at Eager.

"Ames," said the straw Boss, nodding toward Ames as he spoke.

"Good fer Amy," shouted the loquacious Lippy, and Ames almost wished his name had been something else. For a moment he was the center of attention, and in that moment he was accepted as one of them. So we leave him for the time being, "the man with a purpose," burying himself in a frontier cow-camp.

CHAPTER XIV

THE "NESTER"

THE fifth day after Ames and Ingle had left the headquarter's ranch, the dark swarthy man Ames had seen on the porch with the owner and the foreman came down the mountain trail back of the house. His horse and the pack-mule he led both showed the effects of a hard trip. As he rode up to the house both Mr. Frye and his foreman showed great interest. Calling the Mexican to take care of the animals they hurried the dark man into the house and went into executive session. For a moment they sat apparently each waiting for the other to speak, as though dreadful tidings were expected and each wanted to make the other responsible.

"Well, Behannan," said Mr. Frye finally, as he flung his hat almost viciously across the room onto a bed, "what about it? Let's have it."

The dark man being slow to answer, the foreman broke in almost savagely:

" 'J git lost?"

Behannan looked at him almost defiantly at first, then showed his teeth in a leering smile.

"Not so anybuddy'd notice it."

"Well, where's the party un' whut they doin'?"

"Gone!" said the leering Behannan.

"Gone!" Both men seemed relieved by the word.

"Where to?" the foreman asked.

"All but one." The two men almost jumped and the dark man seemed to enjoy their excitement in a cynical sort of way.

"Where's he?" from the owner.

"Went down Shinimo."

"Shinimo? Alone?" The foreman was getting exasperated at Behannan's deliberation.

"No."

"No?" Both men nearly shouted this time. "You said the others left. Damn it, open up and let's have what you got. Who was with him—? this one that went down Shinimo? Did—?"

"Feller come up un met him. Come out o' 'Shinny.' "

Both men looked relieved.

"That's where the trail crosses, isn't it?" asked Mr. Frye, addressing the foreman. He actually smiled.

"Yes. Some feller come over to meet th' other'n un take him acrost."

Now Behannan showed his teeth again, but the smile was more cynical than ever. It was plain they were off the track. There was more to it but he was in no hurry. The foreman was exasperated.

"Fer hell sake, Blackie, come on with it! Did yuh foller 'em?"

Blackie nodded.

"Where to? Whut'd they do? Wher' be they? Down there yet?"

Another nod from Blackie.

"Wull, whut they doin'? Anything?"

Another nod. The foreman's patience was gone.

"Wull, dammit tu 'ell,—*What*?"

"Prospectin'—un—"

" 'Prospectin' un.' *Un what?* Can't yuh say more'n one word 't time? Ur yuh loco?"

Blackie was not locoed. He was such a confirmed cynic that he enjoyed even his own misery and made that of others—even of his friends—as excruciating as possible. He absolutely had brought himself to feel that nothing in life was real but evil; that everything else was pretense and hypocrisy. So he always assumed a manner to make whatever was good seem bad, and all bad as bad as possible. He considered it a loyalty to do this. Knowing, therefore, that what he had to say would be very disturbing to them, he thought it proper to make it just as displeasing as possible. In response to Jackson's question as to

whether he was loco, he looked at the foreman for a full minute and repeated:

"Prospectin' un—*farmin'*,—if yuh please!"

Frye's jaw dropped, Jackson's shut up like a trap. In the eyes of the first was perplexity and appeal; in the latter's, grim determination.

"When in hell'd they git in there?" Frye finally asked in a sort of dejected tone and with a helpless look at Behannan.

"Pears 't one of 'em wuz there good deal of last summer. Th' other'ns jes' visitin' but's talking o' takin' up a place."

There was silence for two full minutes.

"Who are they?" Frye finally asked. "Did you find out?"

"The nester's from somewheres east; th' other'ns frum Calaforny. Seems they knowed each other 't school somewheres. Californy guy's jes vistin' studyin' rocks un things. Goin' out 'n a few days, but the nester means bizness. Got quite a chunk o' land cleared un' some lucern planted, built 'im a cabun un' 'bout half-mile o' ditch, un' some fencin'. He's a working son-uv-a-gun. Don't hardly stop tu eat or sleep. I on'y stayed one night un 'nen hit out to ketch the others. Follered 'em put nigh tu the 'Run' un turned back. The young fellers down the canyon said 't they's students un perfessers frum a collige back east. One Ol' feller an four young uns. Th' ol feller's the perfessor. They been in the Canyon frum th' other side, un come tu jes take a look from this side. Said mebby they'd come back nex fall."

The cynic had got them to the point where suspense had ceased to be the worst torture, and so took delight in "laying it on" good and thick. To realize just how thick it should be known that when Mr. Jacob Frye had first heard of the Bar T ranch it was while looking into the Grand Canyon from the other side. He was on a sight-seeing trip, having come from Flagstaff. At that time he had looked across into Shinimo and

thought what a valuable place it would be, with a ferry at the mouth, as an outlet for the nearly ideal cattle ranch he was told was for sale over on the north side. It was a long way to the railroad out the northern way, he knew, but here was a possible solution of the problem of a shorter way to market, and also a means of getting away from mixing with the people to the north.

Largely on the basis of this possibility he had put much of his ill-gotten money into this Ranch proposition, taking as partners men so situated as to best further his schemes and protect and assist him in them. Now, a fool "nester" had "put a fly in his soup," and the worst of it was that he was not in Mexico, and Mr. Frye was aware that there was no law that he could rightly invoke to oust the intruder. He was aware, too, that he was not popular with the people to the north and that such expedients as he could resort to might have to be accounted for according to the measure of the law. Of course he had plans for working over the governmental agencies to render them adaptable to his purposes. By a very unneighborly policy toward the settlers, such as crowding, menacing and, at the proper stage, buying them out when no other expedient availed, he had acquired almost exclusive possession of a veritable empire. To have those plans interfered with now was exasperating, particularly since there was no legal ground for objecting nor lawful means of preventing actual occupancy. The fact of a little farm in the canyon made but very little difference of itself but it made a very big difference in that it was a beginning of other encroachments. Every nester would soon acquire a few cattle and it was only a matter of time until the Bar T range monopoly would be broken up. In Mexico, where Mr. Frye had been ranching for some years, an occurrence of this kind occasioned no trouble at all beyond the necessity of ordering the intruder away and enforcing the order without recourse to legal process. The perplexity now was not that Mr. Frye's

conscience was against the method prevailing in Mexico, but in the fact that he did not know any other method and was too new to this locality to know just how far it was safe to go. He did know, however, that there was no limit to the extent his foreman would go to prevent settlement anywhere within the scope of country claimed by the company; and he knew that there were others in his employ who would carry out any orders given. It was because of this fact that they had been transferred from the ranch in Mexico. So far bluff, threats, assertion of fake claims, small payments for improvements, asserted claims to watering places, and a decidedly unneighborly policy toward other users of the range, had sufficed. But this was a new proposition. He did not know whence this new nester had come nor what his connections might be, and Mr. Jacob Frye had very definite reasons for not wanting to get involved in a way that would invite too much notice, especially from certain quarters. Time was when he had carried out his personal desires with somewhat of a high hand, having the cunning to have involved in his machinations certain other individuals so circumstanced as to be able to ward off serious trouble. For some years past he had been losing touch with things governmental and political on account of being so much of the time in Mexico; and, curiously enough, he had been so much of his time in Mexico because of rather too intimate an association with things and individuals governmental and political. That, however, had been in another direction and another place. Mr. Frye had not been used to playing his game alone. In Mexico he had had Jackson, and Behannan and Hudman, and others as he needed them. He had them now, but—they were mere puppets, obedient, brusque, and, if occasion required, brutal: they did not reason. They had no cunning even. He had brought them with him from Mexico, and had been using them quite effectively. Now he was afraid, and somehow he coupled that fear with the coming

of Lewis Ames, the new man; he who had come a tenderfoot seeking employment and who, immediately after he was employed, turned out, or into, a broncho buster, and a man of courage, of nerve and sense, not even to be disconcerted by a bullet through his clothes, and keen enough under trying circumstances to entrap him, Jake Frye, into assuming responsibility for his safety.

Mr. Frye knew he ought to be saying something; knew that his two puppets would be suspicious of silence as lack of confidence either in them or in himself, and such a suspicion is dangerous in the mind of the coward or the bully; Jacob Frye did not need to be told that the men before him were a combination of both. Too much the bully to be safe unless they thought it paid, and too much the coward to be trusted when the trust implied real or even probable danger! Adding to the cattleman's perplexity was the fact that he had discerned in Lew Ames the very qualities of which he very much wanted to avail himself, and he had already been planning to that end, a fact which he could not now divulge to the present company. Furthermore he could see that it would not do at all to let his foreman know that he was suspicious of Ames. First, because he had absolutely nothing upon which to base that suspicion; and, last but not least, because the foreman was manifestly chafing under the restraints imposed upon him and the slightest intimation on the part of Mr. Frye that he conceded he had been wrong and Jackson right would certainly be bad policy, if not actually dangerous, by the effect it would have in undermining his influence with Jackson and, therefore, his control over the foreman as well as certain others of the men. Manifestly, Mr. Frye admitted to himself, he had the wrong person to deal with his present problem and, what was worse, he did not know just what particular individuals he did need. His mind went back again to Ames. If he could only trust Ames. Yes—*if he could only trust Ames.* He almost got a

gleam of comfort out of the thought of what he could do with the cool, steady nerve, good sense, and unwavering courage he had seen the new man manifest in the incident the other day. But—and with the last thought his castle crumbled—he absolutely must not trust the new man until he knew more about him. The problem was, then, to know more about "the new man." But how? And, moreover, there was that nuisance of a nester to be disposed of. Could he wait? If he couldn't wait, what should he do? He daren't use Jackson, nor Blackie, nor Hudman. He daren't use Ames. He—yes, there was one hope, Weems. Old "Red" Weems. Weems had cunning, which Jackson didn't have. He had sense—some sense, at least—which none of the others had. He had courage, which Blackie didn't have. Yes, manifestly it was up to Weems. Weems must be gotten on the job at once. The more Mr. Frye thought about it the more clear it was that Weems was the man. Weems knew the other men, but they didn't know him. Yes, this man might be helpful in several ways. He might even find out something about Ames, as well as a way to get rid of the nester. He would see Weems at once.

Having reached a conclusion, Mr. Frye's next problem was to satisfy his foreman that he had a definite plan without disclosing it. He knew also that he must leave such instructions as would serve his purposes, to do which he would season his announcement with mystery to serve as a cloak and at the same time hold the confidence of his men.

"I think," he said, speaking slowly for the sake of impressiveness, "that I know what that fellow means and who's behind him. I'll just make sure—it'll take a little time,—and then I'll know just what we ought to do."

Toward the last the cattleman rung in a note of determination and embellished it with a look of defiance.

"I'll have to take that matter up at once," he went

on. "So get an outfit ready to take me to the ferry tomorrow. I want to go that way."

The remainder of the day and well into the night the cattleman pondered his problem over and over, but found no occasion to modify his conclusions. Each time he would see more plainly than before how a man of Ames' type would fit in so admirably. Then, invariably would come again the ghost of a fear that it was just possible the new man was deliberately there for a purpose; hence the double need of finding out.

CHAPTER XV

DOWN SHINIMO

NEXT morning Mr. Frye set out on his mission to see Weems, after leaving very specific instructions that nothing was to be done with the nester until further orders. There were also particular instructions as to what was to be the attitude toward "the new man."

"Watch him closely, give him pretty free rein, and be able to report in detail," had been the substance of his orders to the foreman.

That afternoon the wrangler and the cook came in with the saddle horses and packs, and just before dark the remainder of the men dashed in after putting the herd into a canyon pasture. The plan was to continue the drive northward up the valley after one more swing eastward along the canyon rim. This last was accomplished in three days. The country was not so rough nor the cattle so wild, and Ames had Ingle's word for it that he had had his "breaking in" under as trying conditions as he could expect to meet.

The ride eastward finished, it was decided to pick up fresh horses for the remainder of the period. Not all the men were needed for this work and some were set to repairing fences and other incidental work. Ames and Hudman were assigned to shoe some horses, this being one phase of the work at which Ames was not an entire novice, as he had at one time worked in a country blacksmith shop.

Working with Hudman, Ames availed himself of the opportunity to draw out from him tactfully something of his idea of the ranch personnel and policy. He found that Hudman was devoted to Jackson and to Frye's policy of unneighborliness and his efforts at range monopolization. He was getting too heavy for first class range work and was trying to make up in

puppet-like support of their methods, copying their sentiments and expressions and always manifesting readiness, if not actual desire, to do some dire thing to prove his loyalty by his only method—brutality.

Evidently he had participated in some activities that had been the means of keeping intending settlers off the country. Particularly was he bitter in his nearly constant denunciation and threats of the people to the north along the Utah line. He classed them all as "Mormons," and threatened what he would do as well as intimating what he had done. It was clear, too, that he was suspicious of every other man on the ranch but Behannan, to whom he always referred as "Blackie."

Ames had been seeking opportunity to cultivate and improve this closer acquaintance as a part of his effort at a classification of the attitude and sentiment of the men on the ranch. He felt satisfied with his progress. He knew now that with care he could elicit more specific information. He had not yet satisfied himself definitely as to Eager and some of the others, but was disposed to classify them with Ingle, rough in manner but gentle in feeling, devoted to their work, and by reason of the character of that work, or rather of the conditions under which it was performed, narrow of view but broad as the world in sympathy, glorying in rugged strength and intolerant only of weakness.

Two days sufficed to bring in the fresh saddle horses, and on the third the little cavalcade left the ranch for the drive up the valley. This required several days and the herd of several hundred steers was moved to the big east pasture to await orders for movement to the shipping point. Several of the men were laid off, and, to his surprise, Ames was not one of the number, he being directed to return to headquarters to wait around there for four days and then to go to the ferry with instructions for "The Swede" to send an outfit to the Indian trading post to meet Mr. Frye and some company.

The duties assigned for the four days not being specific, Ames asked for definite assignment and was told by the foreman just to "kill the time." There was nothing particular to do.

"Would there be any objection to my putting in the time riding to get acquainted with some of the mountain or summer range," he asked.

"Not a bit," the foreman had said, adding, "only they'll be no one to go with you and you'll hev to take chances o' gettin' lost."

The foreman then started on to Kanab to telegraph for information concerning the movement of the beef herd. The Mexican and Ingle were to ride the fences, and Hudman and Blackie, it was stated, would look over the watering places on the north end, although Ames felt certain that their assignment was a still hunt for nesters if not for cattle belonging to other people.

Ames arrived at headquarters shortly after noon, and that same evening Monty, his own horse, came in with a band to water and was captured and held in the pasture that night. Early next morning he was under saddle and just as the sun was peeping over the eastern mountain tops Ames rode over the crest of the mountain back of the ranch and struck southwest. Through more or less dense stands of aspen or spruce timber, then across open grassy parks, the course lay through the long forenoon. Resting for half an hour at noon in a grassy park, at one edge of which was a pond and near by a spring, he saddled again and started on. Now the trail led gradually southward, following a shallow draw that widened now and then into a sort of miniature valley. About mid-afternoon he turned to the left up a ridge, crossed a flat plateau through a magnificent stand of larger spruce and fir and occasional groves of quaken-asps, and dropped down into another canyon, similar to the first, but more winding. Following this for half an hour, he again turned up a ridge to the top of a plateau similar

to the one recently crossed. Across this he rode for twenty minutes and struck another trail almost at right angles. This he took southward again.

Just as the sun was touching the tops of the trees on the distant edge of the mountain, he topped a rather high ridge and looked into a shallow valley in which, some distance apart, were two ponds. Just below him was a log cabin, some corrals, and a pasture. Here he stopped for the night. The place was not occupied but was open. Food he had with him, but his bed was some dry grass on a bunk made of small poles, with a coat and chaps for pajamas, and a slicker coverlid. It was colder than he had anticipated, and several times during the night he got up and replenished the fire in the crude fireplace. He found the night long enough without waiting for daylight, and while the stars were still shining started again on his way.

Now the path led over a high ridge like the one crossed the night before, then gradually downward, sometimes following a shallow winding canyon, sometimes along a flat-topped plateau through open stands of big, yellow pines, and occasionally through pretty groves of aspen in the declivities. Just before noon he came suddenly out of the thick timber and looked into that mightiest of mighty gorges, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

"You know the place, don't you, Monty," he said, speaking to his horse.

CHAPTER XVI

LOOKING TWO WAYS

AS a small child Lewis Ames lived with his parents in the small town of Merton in one of the eastern states. His father was a teacher in a country high school, and, until after her marriage, his mother had also taught school. One day when their baby boy was just past three years old they left him with a kind neighbor named Keith, and were on their way to another town to attend some kind of an educational meeting. Traveling in a small buggy, they had been struck by a fast train and almost instantly killed. Neither of them had a relative in the world so far as their friends and neighbors knew or were able to ascertain. The couple, by reason of their educational attainments and kindly helpfulness and genial disposition, stood high in the estimation of all the people of their acquaintance, and their sad taking off was a shock to the entire community. Inheriting the good will of the community from his parents the child had grown up under the kindly and sane care and guidance of the Keith family: one of them in all respects but name. Through his childhood days he had accepted the care and services of his friends as a matter of course and even in his youth had not come to a full realization of his obligations to those who had befriended him. In fact it was when, just on the verge of young manhood, he found that the friends of his parents had secured from the railroad company responsible for the death of his parents a few thousand dollars, every cent of which had been kept for him with a view to establishing him in business at the proper time, that he came to a full appreciation of the extent of his obligations.

The Keiths were never more than ordinarily well-to-do and the loss of a husband and father before the

older children were of an age to be of much assistance in the way of providing for themselves or the mother, together with some unfortunate business venture, had left the family entirely dependent upon the efforts of its members for support. By industry and frugality the family had lived comfortably and young Ames had lived and labored as had the others, including Judson Keith, a boy within a year of his own age. Through their childhood these two boys had been bound together by ties, closer if possible, than even kinship itself. Young Keith had been trained to the idea that his companion had been robbed of virtually all of a child's heritage of love and the tenderness that is its chief fruits and, hence, had developed a sense of sympathy that even ties of blood relationship might not have engendered. The orphan boy had early come to sense this sympathy, always manifested with beautiful tact and delicacy, and in his way had sought to reciprocate. The two boys had passed their youth and were merging into young manhood, each living largely, if not actually primarily, for the other. With dispositions naturally quite different each had so yielded to the other in notion, taste, or desire that a most beautiful, deep, and abiding friendship had grown out of the ties of childhood and youth's brotherly comradeship.

When they were in their twenty-second year and young Ames had been placed in possession of the money that had come from the settlement of his father's meagre estate he immediately sought an investment for the benefit of his benefactors. He knew that the common desire of himself and of young Keith was to go west and acquire land and establish themselves in farm ranching and stock-raising. Accordingly he had, by consent of all the members of the family, come west and invested in a small ranch and a few head of cattle. Joined later by young Keith they had worked very earnestly for the advancement of their common interests but as they did so there gradually

grew in the mind of Keith the thought, finally manifest in attitude and manner, that he was a dependent, a thought and a manner which their slight prosperity seemed to accentuate and, largely due, if not entirely, to the fact that it was the result of Ames' plans and ideas, though always jointly considered, and, as Ames thought, in every sense common. It came about therefore that as they worked and prospered in a small way Ames worked with the joyous sense that he was to a small degree compensating for priceless favors by the opportunity to turn his small means and his plans, ideas, and energies to the mutual advantage of both. On the other hand, in Keith's mind there grew and grew the conviction that he was dependent. Because it was in a sense Ames' investment, and also because it was true that Ames was the more resourceful and foresighted, Keith more and more left plans to Ames and at the same time—and to his credit be it said—in spite of himself—there grew that haunting sense of dependence, and, also virtually against his will, a proportionate spirit of independence. Finally Ames noticed the change. Noticed it with a shock that made Keith know that he had noticed it and almost brought a climax.

For a time Ames sought earnestly to readjust or reestablish their relationship and made the mistake of suggesting definite division of interest and of profits, meaning thereby to concede to his friend by giving him what manifestly he most desired, independence. He soon found the opportunity and proposed selling out, the proceeds of their work and that realized from the sale of their place to be invested in cattle and necessary equipment. This was done, as Ames thought, in full expectation that the program would go through as planned. To his surprise and sincere regret, however, Keith assumed an attitude of entire independence, though not of intentional unfriendliness, and refused to accept any of the proceeds of the sale. Ames made him accept a liberal allowance for services

on the place and together they set out to find their new location. Through New Mexico and Arizona they searched, but invariably encountered obstacles that militated against settlement. Someone made actual or pretended claim to every place that appealed to them as desirable.

Serving for a time with a surveying party Keith had taken a fancy to a place the party had visited in an off-shoot of the Grand Canyon and had located there. When Ames learned of this he first visited the place and then cautiously went to work to ascertain the probability of being able to acquire title. Convinced that long delay would be encountered in getting a survey he next learned of the sale of the great Bar T ranch to a Mr. Frye and that Frye was claiming the country from Kanab Creek to Buckskin Gulch with the Colorado River as his southern boundry, a veritable empire of itself which included the area where Keith located. Ames foresaw difficulty. Tactfully he tried to dissuade Keith from proceeding with improvements within the disputed territory, not because there was not legal warrant for his being there, but because he feared that the obstacles encountered would be difficult and costly. When he did not succeed in altering the purpose of his friend, Ames at once purchased a small place as near as possible, but outside the territory understood as claimed by Mr. Frye. His sole and deliberate purpose was to aid Keith. In order that he might do this he planned a careful and detailed study, so far as his situation permitted, of conditions of the country, the attitude of the nearest settlers, the laws applicable to such conditions, and, lastly, the personality, policy, and plans of this Mr. Jacob Frye. In pursuance of this last he had sought employment on the Bar T ranch, and was now taking the first opportunity to visit his friend Keith. The visit would be short, he knew, but he would not forego the opportunity, meagre as it was, to manifest a friendly interest in his boyhood friend whom he was most anxious to serve. It was with

a genuine thrill of pleasure, therefore, that he looked down at that little green spot in the canyon far below, a pleasure marred only by the thought that there was possible, yes, probable, trouble ahead, trouble which Ames intended to avert if possible, to share or to assume if need be.

"Hello," he said, as he started down the steep trail. "Some one's been on the trail this spring, quite a party of them, in fact."

After studying the tracks for some time, he looked a little perplexed.

"The last tracks come out, Monty, old boy," he said, speaking again to the horse. "Maybe he isn't there." Then, after a pause, "Well, we'll go and see."

CHAPTER XVII

WHY?

AS Ames rode down the winding zig-zag trail he watched intently for the first sign that would evidence the actual presence of anyone in the canyon below. Presently coming to a point in the trail where it approached the very edge of a great cliff, he could see over the tops of the trees and out into the miniature valley far below, a patch of ground bare of all brush but covered evenly with a faint green that he knew to be young alfalfa. It was just beginning to show above soil in which a few weeks previously the seed had been planted. At a similar place in the trail a quarter of a mile farther down he could discern in the newly planted patches small silver streaks that he rightly took to be small streamlets of water shimmering in the afternoon sun, and his perplexity was at an end. The water on the "new" ground meant that it was being irrigated, which fact in turn meant that the irrigator was not far away. Whereas, he had been riding rather recklessly down this mountain thread of a trail on account of the pressing desire to determine as soon as possible whether his trip these two days would be in vain, he now pushed the sure-footed horse all the faster in anticipation of the happy meeting to come. Six weeks in the saddle almost continuously had made of him a hardened vaquero, and had taught him a great many of the little things that go to make riding less difficult for both man and beast; particularly how to balance himself to meet the various situations and variety of gaits of a saddle horse in rough country. Now he stood straight in his stirrups with hands pressed on the saddle fork and leaned slightly forward over the horn as the horse swung down the winding trail in a swinging trot. His knees were just slightly flexed to serve as springs and break the jar of the pounding

steps. When the trail was too steep or rough for faster gait the horse, now almost as impatient as the rider, settled to a single-foot shuffle. Ames sat easily in the saddle and adapted himself to the changed motion and relieved the strain on his knees and feet. Now it was too steep for more than a careful walk as the trail hugged the base of a high over-hanging ledge to avoid the interminable tangle of chaparral and treacherous sliderock underneath. A quarter of a mile further along and some hundreds of feet down, the trail traversed a nearly level terrace for some distance and the impatience of horse and rider was responded to by a brief canter, the only place on the entire trail for several miles where such a gait was possible. As the trail switched suddenly back from the brink of the next high cliff, Ames paused to view the panorama below.

"My!" he exclaimed, "that fellow's some worker."

And as if addressing someone present he went on: "Just look at that ditch and fencing, and the amount of clearing he's done. And, by George, if he hasn't started another house!"

Ames knew well the double motive of all that effort, and, as he rode on down the trail, a curious mixture of emotions stirred his being. Judson Keith was working to succeed, to excel—and for what? Ames' mind went, though against his will, back to the time, and sensed again something of the shock, when he had awakened to the fact that he, too, loved the dear girl for whom that "other" and better house was intended, and of all the trials of his earnest, active young life the great one of all was in the cruel twist of fate that put friendship and friendly obligation so directly in opposition to self-interest and made personal opportunity and temptation so nearly one and the same thing. That he could have won and kept the love of Janice Kane, he was very sure, but that to do so was virtually to turn ingrate he had not always been so sure but had resolved the doubt against self-interest and in

favor of the acknowledged obligations of friendship. That he could have succeeded in others of his plans by ignoring the interests, if not the spoken desires, of his childhood and youthful comrade, Judson Keith, he also knew. He was not now fighting over again that battle with himself. He had won it long ago, but it had almost cost him his faith in an over-ruling Providence. It was only at times that he found it difficult if not impossible to prevent the recurring question "Why?" Why had he been deprived of parental love and care? Why dependent upon the kindness of others? When, as a result of these, he had come to a realization of his obligation to his good benefactors, *why* was it that just when he had sensed the first real, and, as he verily believed, abiding sense of love he must awake to the fact that the same girl was the object of the affections of his childhood friend and comrade? Again, when he had dedicated himself to the task of compensating his good friends so far as possible for their kindness to him, *why* was it that his earnest efforts, the product of his sincerest motives, should be rendered nearly futile by the spirit and attitude of the very one he would serve?

Lewis Ames was not selfish, neither was he lazy, and, above all things, he did not want to be pessimistic or cynical. He simply, and with unqualified honesty of purpose, wanted to be useful,—effective for good, and to discharge fully every obligation, particularly those based upon friendship and simple honest charity. He did not place any limit to the effort he would make to attain this end. He had no complaint that the task seemed hard. Rather, he rejoiced in the fact that what he could do would permit of no stint of effort, and that therefore he could with the more certainty prove to himself—for after all it was upon that that his peace of mind depended—the sincerity of his gratitude. His chief perplexity was not the necessity of renunciation but lay in the fact that his sincerest efforts and most complete self-renunciation did not

seem to reach the end at which he aimed. In other words, he had no absolute proof that his motives were good and his efforts sincere—or, rather, he felt that he was not actually proving that fact to the Keiths, however hard he tried to do so, and hence he got no satisfaction out of the philosophy that faith in the power to achieve, rather than sense of victory won, was the chief thing.

Ames had now reached the bottom of the canyon and only a few rods farther down came to a dam in the creek where the water for the irrigation of the land below was diverted from the main channel to a ditch. The dam and the ditch were both of recent construction and the result of much arduous labor, it was plain to see. A little farther on he came to a fence and passed through a gate constructed of small poles. A clump of trees and some brush nearly hid the house from view; he was first attracted to it by the sound of some one chopping. Passing between a low projecting point of rocks and one huge, detached boulder he found himself almost in the door yard of the little cabin of "the nester," the home of his childhood friend and youthful associate, Judson Keith.

CHAPTER XVIII

LOOKING BACKWARD BUT THINKING AHEAD

THE carpet of grass so muffled the footsteps of the horse that Ames was almost upon Keith, who, with his back to the approaching horseman, was engrossed in his work of building a fence of small peeled poles to enclose the cabin yard. He heard the familiar click, click of spur chain on the stirrup and turned in manifest surprise, but immediately friendly recognition displaced the look of startled concern.

"Hel-lo, hello, hel-lo!" Keith exclaimed, fairly rushing at his friend. "Old boy, how are you? Gee, but it's good to see you!"

"I'm fine and dandy, "Old Com,' " Ames answered. "Heap wino, as our Piute neighbors would say. And how are you?"

"Fine, fine! Did I look some startled?"

Ames chose to ignore the question though he had clearly noticed the look on his friend's face, and it told him more plainly than words that Keith was really working under apprehension of the possibility of trouble.

"The last fellow down here was enough to give one the creeps," Keith went on apologetically, "swarthy, black-bearded, evil-eyed old cuss that reminded me of a snake. He wouldn't tell his business. Claimed he'd gotten lost. But I noticed that his horse was branded with the Bar-T, and I also noticed that brand on the bell strap on his pack mule.

Keith's manner made it quite clear that he was a little vexed with himself for bringing up this matter at all for it was a virtual admission of a thing he fully intended to disavow. Puzzled for the moment, he turned to Ames' horse, to lead away from the subject he had unintentionally broached.

"Monty's looking fine," he said. "You must be

humoring him. Gee," he continued, pressing on the horse's flesh, "he's as hard as a grain-fed work horse."

Ames took this as an opening to introduce the main purpose of his trip.

"Yes," he explained, watching his friend for look or demeanor that would evidence his attitude toward what he was going to say, "I've been working for the Bar-T outfit for a few weeks and he's had nothing much to do, so I kept him down in the valley on the white sage. It's good feed and stronger than the spring grass."

Ames had noted plainly the look of surprised disapproval on his friend's face when he mentioned working for the Bar-T Company, and also the immediate effort to disguise that tell-tale look under one of feigned curiosity.

"That white sage must certainly be the dope," and Keith, having said so much, seemed to feel himself back on safer ground.

"Well," he went on, "let's put him where he can get something to eat. This pasture," indicating an enclosure near by, "hasn't much grass right here close, but up on the hillside there's good bunch-grass and some black gramma. Jerk the saddle and I'll put it here in the shed."

Ames had another surprise that he was loth to spring and for that very reason was anxious to get it over with.

"I can't stay but just tonight, Jud. I'm awfully sorry, but I have an assignment that necessitates being back at headquarters day after tomorrow, which means that I must leave not later than noon tomorrow."

Keith was clearly disappointed, and the fact added to Ames' discomfiture. Hastily he bethought himself of an excuse for changing the subject. Removing the saddle from the horse, he put it down as he spoke.

"By the way, Jud, have you a shoeing outfit? Monty

caught his foot coming down the trail and started a shoe, and I must tighten it while I think of it."

Keith started for the cabin and turned at the door to ask if any nails were needed. Ames stated that the hammer and clincher would be sufficient.

"Gee, Lew, I'm sorry you can't stay a while. I haven't seen you for a coon's age and there's lots I wanted to talk about and to show you," said Keith, returning from the house with the tools. Ames expressed his own regret as he took up the horse's foot and proceeded with his task.

"I'd sure love to, Jud, but the men are all away and I have to go to the ferry to tell the man there to send the spring wagon to the trading post for Mr. Frye and some of the folks he's bringing with him; I've simply got to make the trip on time. There were just four days to spare and it's a day-and-a-half ride each way. I wanted to see you and so caught my own horse and slipped over here. I knew you had been home and I wanted to hear about the folks besides having a visit with you and see your place. How's mother and the girls, and Freddie?"

"Mother's quite well. She asked all about you."

"My, but I owe that mother of your's a lot," said Ames with sincere fervor.

Besides the genuineness of his gratitude to the good woman who had taken him in as a mere baby and verily been a mother to him, he had of late, due to Judson Keith's spirit and attitude, been forced to cloak virtually all the efforts by which he aimed to prove his gratitude to Keith in professions of gratitude toward Mrs. Keith.

"It's a fact," he went on, "though I didn't think of it then, that she mothered me almost more than she did you. And you—dear little kid—didn't resent it a bit. How's Fan and Kate?"

"Oh! they're fine. Fan's quite a young lady now. Has a beau, you know. Little Commodore Moore.

He thinks he's grown up now, and, gee, he is tall as I am—nearly."

They had turned the horse in the pasture and stood leaning on the fence as they talked. One subject Ames desired to discuss but was puzzled as to how best to bring it up, and he had been hoping that Keith would save him the necessity of introducing it. Personally he would have desired that there be no mention of Janice Kane, but the fact that he did not mention her, he well knew, would be the best proof that he did think of her. To manifest his personal indifference, and thereby give proof to his friend of his own renunciation, he particularly desired some mention of Janice Kane.

It seemed to be up to him.

"And how are the Kanes," he finally asked, with a bantering smile, "Janice, in particular?"

"All right,—I guess." Clearly Keith seemed to resent the fact that her name had been mentioned.

"You 'guess'?"

"Yes, *'I guess.'* At least I judged so by appearances."

Ames was puzzled by his friend's demeanor and tone.

"Appearances at close range, I'll bet," he went on smiling and bantering.

"Not so very close," tartly.

"Come, come, Jud, I meant no offense. Furthermore, I don't see why we should not talk to one another about—such matters—about Janice, do you? I'm not butting in. At least, I don't mean to. She's an A-Number-One good and sweet little girl, besides being as pretty as they make them. She's fond of you, everybody knows, and I'm sure you've every reason to be fond of her—not to put it stronger."

"Oh, there are other girls in the world besides *her*. Some just as pretty and just as good, I guess."

"Mighty few, old boy. You've got to go hunting some to find them. But what's the matter, Jud? Didn't she treat you right? Did she disappoint you some way? Someone got the inside track on you?"

"Seeing that I was never in the race, how could anyone get the inside track on me?"

Ames was aware, when it was too late, that he had spoken tactlessly, but having gone so far he knew that he must now go on at least to some more favorable opportunity to drop the subject.

" 'Never in the race'? Too bad you weren't! For the last year before we came out here you couldn't see, hear, think of or talk about anyone else, and you got grumpy as the deuce if anyone else tried to be nice to her. Yes, and doggone you, how many letters have you had from any girl but her and your sisters since we've been out here?"

"I might say that it was none of your business, but as you seem to make it such, I'll tell you that it doesn't make one bit of difference if I did like her and get letters from her if I don't like her ways now and don't get any *more* letters from her—does it?"

It was going from bad to worse, but clearly Ames could not leave the matter here.

"Come, Jud, forgive me if I've been butting into affairs that are not my business," he said. "I grant that it's none of my business; but we've been so chummy and had no secrets from one another that I'd rather forgotten that we couldn't always have each other's confidences, and that there'd be things that even we couldn't share. Before we leave the subject, however, Jud, by the strength of our—of our more than friendship, let me have permission to 'butt in' just long enough to suggest that you do not let a momentary jealousy influence you to take an attitude that will not be best for you nor for—for—her, Jud."

"By the strength of that same friendship, let me ask you, Lew, to let me pursue my own course in—that matter, and also to ask you if it isn't just possible that your own interest in her has perhaps magnified your conclusions as to mine?"

Ames knew that he was caught, but after a puzzled pause decided he'd rather be *true* than *truthful.*

"No, you misjudge me there. But I must ask your pardon for one more question. It is not for any interest that I have shown in her that makes you talk as you do—is it, Jud?"

Keith seemed loathe to pursue the subject.

"No, it is not. Although I think it probable your interest is, now, at least, greater than mine."

"I don't understand you, Jud."

"Well, you are manifesting considerable interest in her, aren't you? While I'm quite indifferent. Isn't that quite plain? Now, can you drop the matter—please?" and Keith strode away after more poles.

Ames, sorely puzzled, stood looking after him for fully two minutes.

"Yes, old boy," he said, speaking to himself, "I think I can drop it."

He was thinking, thinking.

"I don't know myself, yet," reflectively. Then, with emphasis, "God knows that I'd not butt in if he wants her—or if she loves him. But if they're through—I'm not—so—sure—that I—that I will drop the matter."

Keith, returning with more small poles as though to proceed with work, evidently had put the subject out of his mind—or at least pretended to have done so.

"Gosh, Lew, I wish you could stay over awhile," he said. Then after a pause, "I hate to see you working for that Bar-T outfit, Lew. You don't belong with a bunch like that."

Ames was so neatly trapped before, whether designedly or not he was not sure, that he approached the new subject with some misgivings. Besides, the new turn of affairs with reference to Janice Kane had somewhat upset him, so that there was a double cause for his not replying promptly to his friend's comment, a fact which, taken in connection with others shortly to occur, was accepted by Keith as having great significance.

"I dislike it myself in some respects, Jud," he finally

managed to say. "But I have a double motive—," after saying which Ames could have cursed himself for his stupidity, for it came to him when it was too late, that of all persons alive Judson Keith was the one to whom he could not truthfully state at least one —and that, the chief one—of the motives. And, what made matters worse, he was conscious that Keith was noticing his confusion. He groped therefore for a substitute second motive, while he lamely stated the first one, the result being that in the effort to make one motive into two, he nearly left himself with none at all.

"I got a man named Dunning on my place," Ames finally ventured, "who takes care of it and does most of what is necessary for little more than his keep, and I wanted to get a little money to stock up with and besides I wanted to learn the cattle business and I thought a job with the Bar-T outfit would serve both purposes."

"They say it was a very decent concern before this last bunch got hold of it," Keith volunteered. Then, with sudden concern:

'Say, damn my hide! Ain't I the limit? I'll bet you haven't had a square meal since you left the ranch. Let's go in and fix something," and Keith started hurriedly toward the house.

"Oh, don't you be too sure about that," Ames protested. "I brought grub with me and have eaten regularly; besides it's not been the rule on the ranch during the round-up to think about lunch until the day's work was done."

"All of which," Keith declared, "is no reason why you shouldn't eat when there's opportunity and one's civil enough to offer it."

"Now, Jud, you know darn well that I'd have asked you for something to eat if I was hungry."

"Yes, and I know 'darn well' what sort of a grub stake you'd lay in for a trip like this. Barely enough to keep your—your stomach from eatin' up your liver,"

laughed Keith. "Don't you run across some queer expressions out like this?" he continued. "You'd know I borrowed that one. And while it may not be welcome in polite society it does have the merit of being expressive."

This sally almost completely restored the old-time comradeship, and the two were soon busy with coffee pot and frying pan, and exchanging jokes, observations, and experiences.

When Keith could get Ames to eat no more, even by joining him in eating a dish of stewed apples, they piled up the used dishes to be washed along with what would be used for supper and went out to look over the place. Lew was still more struck with the amount of work that had been done, and with the comprehensiveness of Jud's plans for the future. Answering Ames' questioning remark that Keith could not possibly have done all the work himself, Jud explained that he had hired some Indians to do part of the clearing and part of the work on the ditch. He also told of the recent visit of their mutual friend, Harry Trelwyn, and of the possibility of Trelwyn's returning the following spring to take up a place a little farther down the valley.

Thus the afternoon was spent, and thus late into the night the two friends sat and talked and finally went to bed in the same bunk, glad in the joy of each other's presence. Yet each was thoroughly conscious that, for some reason unaccountable and inexplicable, an indefinable something was persistently—they both hoped not immutably—pushing them apart; had so set the course of their future lives that their paths were perceptibly diverging. Each sought solace in the thought that it was mere difference in business plans, or the natural consequence of individuality. Deep into the night, long after conversation had ceased and Ames thought his friend fast asleep, very cautiously he put an arm over and partially around Keith and pressed it there ever so lightly. To his surprise, and

for a brief flash of time his chagrin, Jud suddenly turned, reached out, and took Ames into his big, strong arms. The clasp was mutual and in it was all the joy of childhood's happy times, all the mutual hopes and plans of the close-woven paths of youth and young manhood—ay, of hopes and sincere well-wishes for the future, and, as each thought, final renunciation of things they could neither divide nor yet share together. They had yet to learn the potency of supreme sacrifice and the miracles that are thereby wrought.

CHAPTER XIX

AND AGAIN, WHY?

ACCORDING to schedule Ames left at noon the next day, glad that he had come; glad to find that their old-time comradeship and friendly relations were evidently going to continue even though their individual paths and their particular notions might vary. At the same time, Ames sensed a feeling of depression. In the first place, Keith's attitude toward Janice Kane, to a considerable degree served to further augment the perplexities of the situation. In his heart Ames was more than fond of Janice, and felt that with only casual encouragement his sentiment would be reciprocated. More studied by the very reason of the necessity of renunciation, his feelings toward the young woman had been tinctured with a philosophic air that had only made his observation and his estimation of her splendid qualities all the more sound and lasting, and—now, if Keith had—if the need for that supposed renunciation had passed— But no, he must not let his feelings have too free reign. It might be only a temporary misunderstanding soon to be adjusted. And then—Ames knew the thought was egotistical, albeit honestly so—it might be that *she* had come to a definite conclusion, and—, but even if she had, Ames suddenly realized, that did not materially change the situation. If she had made up her mind what could he do about it? Could or would he build upon Keith's misfortune? There was no question about that. He positively would not, he said to himself, —and then came the thought, "But what of *her?*" If Janice Kane loved him and not Judson Keith, would it be right to ignore that fact?

Pondering that phase of the matter for some time Ames, though without deriving much satisfaction from it, reached the conclusion that the course nearest to

both expediency and honor would be to drop the assumption that Keith's changed attitude was in any way based upon Janice Kane's love for—for someone else. Dropping it, though it did some violence to his honest convictions as well as to his own sentiments, Ames resolved that neither expediency, necessity, nor honor required that he make any effort to ascertain what Janice thought about him, or what reason—or whim—might be back of Keith's present attitude. While this conclusion confronted his conscience it did so at the expense of a dear and sacred sentiment, for, while love may make sacrifices it does not, by reason thereof, cease to live, but on the other hand, often, if not always, feeds and grows—not upon what it gets, but what it gives. Ames did not pursue the philosophy that far, however, for two reasons. First, because it did not lead to any solution, nor lessen the perplexities of the general problem that confronted him, and, second, because it seemed to him to be arguing with plain duty. And so it came about that Ames found a sort of grim amusement in the recurring questions as to the "why" of things, but found it neither satisfying nor serviceable to pursue the question beyond the point that marked the plain, yes, or even the sometimes *dim*, course of duty. The path of duty is a comfortable one when it lies parallel with that of expediency and of love and of self-interest, but when expediency plays the part of the flirt, and mocks at the toiler on the hot, hard road, when love pleads with him to turn aside, to stop and sit and rest, or to swerve into the shadier course of pleasure for the time, when the soft, snug seats of complacency loom invitingly to view, and even honor seems so far, far up the rugged dust-strewn course as to have no more concern with things behind, then it is that duty's path is left alone for those who are strong of will with lamps of faith that shine ahead and show the way marked out. Lewis Ames sensed this in a vague, general way and when he asked himself "why" duty was sometimes made

hard; "why" its course so often crossed the easy path of expediency; "why" love and right should ever disagree, he did not ask from any sense of disagreement with the course of things, nor because he yearned for ease, but more from a sense of interest and the desire for justice. Of course, he had to do some things he would have been glad to avoid, and had avoided some things he would have preferred to grapple with, but his questioning lost its perplexity as soon as it discerned the path of duty. However, he was yet to understand the purpose of work, of struggle to overcome, of the worth of encountering and surmounting obstacles as the developers as well as the tests of will, the measure of worth, the makers of men. How he followed the path of duty to the ultimate vindication of this stern creed is yet to be seen.

CHAPTER XX

ENTER WEEMS

LEAVING Keith's place, Ames decided to return by way of the White Creek Trail. It would enable him to see some new country, and, since it topped the mountain at the same point as did the other trail which it joined just under the rimrock, he would have no trouble finding his way back through the forests that covered the top of the plateau. White Creek came into the main Shinimo three-quarters of a mile below Keith's place, so that as Ames took the trail around the shoulder of the point that divided the two canyons, he did not see, just a little farther down, two men coming up the main canyon afoot and driving two burros with packs on. The high brush hid them from view, until he had turned the point so that they were directly behind him. They saw him, however, as he swung round the point just where the trail was high enough to bring him into view.

The elder of the two, a florid, rather bulky, light-complexioned man of about fifty, who wheezed as he walked, was greatly interested in Ames, so much so that he did not cease staring at him until, walking with his head turned to one side, he walked into a cactus that didn't know any better than to stay right where it had taken root fifteen or twenty years previously. What the florid, wheezy one said is not exactly material here; besides, it would not be appreciated by one who has never made the acquaintance of a northern Arizona cactus in a similar manner, while to those who have, and whose acquaintance extends to some familiarity with the picturesque if not elegant vocabulary of the habitué of western mining camps and cow ranches, no explanation would be adequate. The atmosphere, figuratively speaking, was blue and smoky, and the hardihood of that Arizona

cactus is attested by the fact that it did not shrivel up from the heat, nor blush red at the variety of things the man called it. Possibly it was able to withstand the epithetical castigation by reason of the fact that the man included himself in much that was said, and even included the country and the man on the gray horse that had ridden off up the White Creek Trail in a haze of philosophical "Whys" nearly as complicated as the red complexioned man's statements about the cactus, himself, and things in general. The other of the two men thought a time or two of saying something sympathetic, but was a little afraid to trust himself because his diaphragm was bobbing up and down inside of him like the valve of a rapid action pump, and he didn't know what sort of sound might be pumped out of him if he attempted to talk. He looked at the burros for some suggestion of an excuse for saying or doing something, but the burros had stopped in the skimpy shade of a mesquite and gone to sleep. After a time, when the atmosphere around there had begun to cool slightly and the purple face and neck of the injured one had begun to change back to red, and the fit of rage made room for a faint flicker of thought, the swearing, fuming man undid his cartridge belt, removed his "artillery," and began to unbutton his pants. They dropped limply down around his ankles, exposing tan colored drawers, fastened with a mesquite thorn. The thorn removed, the drawers settled down on the pants, and the man stopped as though looking for something in his shins and knees. Numerous little blood spots showed along the front of the legs; here and there a broken cactus spine protruded, but most of them had broken off even with the skin. Sitting down, the man began to pick at the needles, grimacing with pain and anger at each effort, and grunting from the uncomfortable posture. The pudgy fingers being manifestly unadapted to the task, the other man extracted a pair of tweezers from some place in the handle of a large pocket knife and silently offered

them. The red one did not accept the tweezers, but abandoned his efforts with a huge, grunted exhalation, then sat up straighter.

"See whut you kin do, Cal," he said suddenly, with a wave of his hand at his shins. "They's a million uv' em there, but my damn belly's in the way un I can't git close enough."

Pulling his wide brimmed hat low over his face and bending unnecessarily low "Cal" worked patiently and fairly effectively for some minutes while the bare-legged one writhed and muttered and mopped the sweat from his moist face. When such of the spines as were visible on the surface had been removed and the tweezers were probing for the buried ones, the tortured victim, more from necessity than choice, took refuge in a stoical determination to "tough it out."

"Hell, Cal," he said, through clenched teeth and firm lips, "let 'er go at that. They ain't no use o' tryin' to git 'em all," and the man pulled up his drawers and began to scratch in the sand at his side. He soon unearthed the thorn and pulling one corner of the drawer band through the top button-hole he pushed the improvised fastener through the protruding corner and determinedly but gingerly stood up, buttoned his pants, buckled his pistol on, and walked over and kicked a sleeping burro.

"How much further d'ye 'spose it is tu that damned place?" he said.

"Can't be much farther," the other suggested. "That might be him that went up that canyon."

"Don't think so. That was probably some cow puncher down to look 'im over. Rode like one."

CHAPTER XXI

THE NESTER HAS VISITORS

KEITH had just put away his dinner dishes and was preparing to go up to the field to regulate the water on his newly planted alfalfa, when he noticed a little dust rising above the brush a short distance down the flat. A look of concern spread over his face, then his lips came together firmly and he leaned on his shovel and waited. Presently he saw a hat, and then another, and immediately after, the tops of two packs bobbing along through the sage and rabbit brush by the pasture fence. The look of concern was now more one of curiosity.

"Prospectors," he said aloud, and walked to the gate, opened it and waited.

"How de do, gentlemen?" he greeted.

"Oh, like most of our cult, hopeful—hopeful," answered the older of the two.

"Well, it's better to hope than despair. Will you unpack?"

"Well," the man appeared to hesitate, "I don't know. How far is it to Fall Creek?"

"Oh, six or eight miles, I should say, not over that. Seven miles, maybe," Keith informed him, hoping that for the sake of company they would stay for a while at least.

"If it's seven miles a-horse back," laughed the inquirer, "how far it it travelin' by hand?"

"Well, with a burro to prod, I'd think it was about twenty," laughed Keith. "You're welcome to stop."

"Well, maybe we will stay awhile," smiled the florid one. "You don't seem crowded with cump'ny."

Keith smiled. "No," he said, "there's no house party on just now."

"Ain't havin' much trouble with the neighbor's chickens scratchin' your garden up, I guess?"

"No, with the exception of the Bar-T people, there's no one within the seventy miles of me east and none nearer than fifty or sixty miles on the north and west, so it hasn't got serious yet. Put your things right in the house, Mister—"

"Weems is my name," the older man told him. "My pardner—Mr. Ward, Mister—"

"Keith is my name, I'm glad to know you, Mr. Ward."

"Right here under the tree will be all right, Mr. Keith. Thanks, we'll not stop long," Weems suggested.

"Oh, you'll stay till morning, won't you?"

The one man seemed to do all the talking for the two.

"No, I guess not, thank you. We got a hunch thet there was some placer ground just this side o' Fall creek, and we meant to see if it's so before the word gits too fur."

"I'm afraid your hunch isn't a true one, Mr. Weems," Keith ventured frankly. "When I first came in here there was an old placer miner here and he prospected this country clear up to the rimrock. Dug to bed rock in lots of places and panned all along the creek. He told me that there wasn't a sign. Didn't even get a color. Then a young mining engineer friend of mine has been here with me lately and he prospected quite a bit just for pastime, and he said there was nothing here. We'd heard about the rumor of placer dirt in here, and after he looked the country over pretty well he said that the report probably got started through some ignorant guy seeing this mica in the sand. You can see it right in the water in the creek in lots of places."

By this time Weems was putting hobbles on the burros.

"Well, that may be. But some of the biggest finds have been made just where old timers and collige fellers said they wuzen't any."

Keith admitted that he had heard that such was the case. But he asserted that he wouldn't give much for

the placer gold one would find on Shinimo. Then, remembering his manners, "Excuse me—have you men fed today?" he asked in characteristic western parlance.

Weems thanked him, with the assertion that "we done et just a while ago," and volunteering further that if they'd "knowed he wuz here they'd come up and mixed chuck with him."

Keith allowed that, if the Bar-T outfit knew he was here, they'd probably make a great fuss about it.

"They seem to think that the Lord made this whole country just for them, and that they can have it without legal procedure or government consent. They've bluffed everybody out of here before, but," and his manner showed determination, "they can't bluff me. If they get me out of here it won't be by bluffing. I know what the law is and what it requires to get and hold the land."

"Them Bar T's is a purty hard outfit, ain't they?"

Weems was getting quite chatty now. He was lying on the ground, braced against his pack under the tree, and whittling a stick as he talked. Keith, not desiring to abandon his company, had resumed work on the fence. Ward peered around the premises unnoticed by the others. Keith enjoyed both the chat and the friendly manner of his visitor.

"It's a cinch the present Bar-T owners have got their share of gall," Keith volunteered. "The boys, that is, the hands, aren't so bad, but it's the Boss, Jackson. The property, that is the cattle and improvements, used to belong to an outfit over in Utah, but they sold to a fellow named Majors, and he sold to Old Frye, from out south somewhere, and he's raising particular hell. He discharged the old foreman, because he was disposed to conduct affairs on the principle of 'live and let live' and didn't cheat or claim exclusive right to the whole country. The present boss is an old gouger named Jackson, from down in Mexico. He's been on some big ranch down there that owned all-out-doors

and worked a bunch of peons, and he's certainly some pippin. Most of the old hands have quit and he's putting on a bunch of greasers and Indians and outlaws until I don't see how any respectable man can work with them. I know very well that some of the boys are just sticking on and putting up with his dirt because they know he wants them to quit. I shouldn't be surprised if one or two of them aren't staying with it for protection to the people to the north and west who still have some cattle on the range."

"Gad, that must be a hell-uv-a-outfit," was the way Mr. Weems stated his opinion.

Keith nodded emphatically.

"You've said it, Mister. That's what they are." After a pause, he went on:

"Gentlemen, make yourselves at home, I'll have to ask you to excuse me for a while. I must run up the canyon. I have a little stream of water out on some land where I've planted alfalfa, and I'll have to go look after it. This irrigating new land before it's sodded requires pretty close attention, or I'd not be so discourteous as to go off and leave you. Or, perhaps you'll go along? It isn't far."

Mr. Weems hadn't forgotten his blistered heels nor his tortured shins.

"No, thanks. Don't let us detain you. We must pack up soon and go on a ways. If they ain't nothin' up this way, as you tell, we must git back to the river soon as we kin and hunt new diggins."

"Well, I'll not be gone long," Keith explained. "Make yourselves at home. You're welcome to go in and play the piano and look through the family album," he laughed, "only don't scratch the furniture nor wake the baby."

"Thanks, thanks," and Weems joined in the laugh. "We'll try to act civilized," and all laughed as Keith shouldered his shovel and started off.

He was scarcely out of hearing when Weems and Ward stopped laughing. They stared at one another a

moment, then Ward burst out again in partially suppressed laughter. Weems was sarcastic.

"Well," he fairly snapped, "what the hell's eatin yu?"

Ward tried to be stern but could hardly keep from laughing.

"Eatin' me?" he asked a little incredulously. "Eatin' *me!*" he repeated with emphasis, "I'm laughing at what must have been gnawing at you for lo, these weary moments that have been dragging by since the prospectors' arrival at the new ranch on Shinimo."

Weems seemed irritated. "I ain't seen nothin' so funny," he growled.

"Anyway, you'll have to excuse me if I do," and Ward laughed all the harder. "You went clear to Flagstaff to git this prospector's outfit for a disguise to come and stake some placer claims on the nester's little claim on Shinimo. Walked eight miles in the sand up this hot canyon tryin' yer hardest to look and act like a prospector in spite of the blisters on yer heels, only to get here and find the nester with ironclad proof that there ain't 'a color' in the whole bloomin' basin." Again Ward burst into laughter.

"Stop it, you fool!" Clearly, Weems was exasperated. "You don't know but what there's some one around here. He might be comin' back or not gone very far."

"Oh, don't worry," said Ward, looking the way Keith had gone, "I can see him going up the canyon, and he's still going. And if I am a fool, I've got company," and he burst into a laugh again, and then proceeded. "If you could only see the funny side of it you might forget them blisters on yer heels, and the cactus in yer shins. 'Prospectors' don't mind little things like them."

"Prospectors is welcome to 'em un all the dam' placer dirt outside o' hell—and inside too, fer's that goes. But I'm not through yit. A fine detectif you are to throw up the sponge the first time some little things goes wrong," was Weem's rejoinder, moving gingerly and grimacing from pain.

"You thought there was a whole lot of *little things gone wrong* when them cactuses jabbed into yer legs, I'll bet," and Ward actually laughed at the thought of the episode.

"Oh, shet up! You give me a pain that's worse'n the blisters and the cactuses. You gourdhead! You think that because you never did have a idear that I never had only one."

Ward started to speak rather testily, but ended by laughing.

"Well," he said, "if I never 'did had' many 'idears' I 'did had' some sense of humor. But go ahead with yer rat killin'. Shoot yer wad. I'm game. Don't slit yer shirt. What next?"

"Well, you jist keep a look-out while I," and sarcasm was manifest in tone and manner, "make ourselves to home and look through the 'fambly album' un 'don't wake the baby.' I'm goin' t' go through him and see whut information I c'n git what's valu'ble."

Producing a bunch of keys, Weems went on, "I've gut keys here ut'll open anything this side uv the perly gates, un I c'n take un 'nenvelope to pieces and put it together again so it'll look better'n it did when it wuz made. Now don't go to sleep."

Weems pushed open the door and entered the cabin.

CHAPTER XXII

"THE FAMILY ALBUM"

AS Weems entered the house, Ward looked after him in manifest disgust, saying to himself:

"Yes, he'll make himself to home! The crook! He's a pretty combination to be hooked up with. But it looks as though the end might justify the means, so I can stand it, I guess."

After a while Weems appeared at the cabin door with a letter and other papers in his hand.

"Keep a sharp look-out, Cal," he cautioned. "The fambly album's purty interestin' and I don't want to be s'prised. Listen tu this:" and he read laboriously from a letter.

> "I hope you will not have any trouble. I almost wish you'd taken Lew's advice and not tried to make a ranch where that company would oppose you. As you say, though, some one must 'buck the combination,' in order to show how the land hogs are beating the government and retarding settlement. I'm quite proud that you have the pluck to do it, but sorry that conditions make it necessary. Only, do right whatever you do. I think you are mistaken about Lew being afraid. Very likely he has the same end in view that you have, but a different method of attaining it. I think he's good and brave and will do right, just as I think you will. He writes that you are apt to have some trouble but that he will help you as much as he can. When you see him give him our love and thank him for the Indian moccasins he sent. They're fine for house shoes and so com-comfort—"

"Oh, that stuff don't 'mount to nuthin'," he said, giving up further effort at reading, "but that other's the dope. The old womern—it's his mammy that's writin'—he's been braggin' tu her, I guess, and she's tellin' him tu stick it out un whut a he-row he'll be. Trust a dam' woman to put a man up 'gainst trouble ever time. This guy'll be fool enough to try to stick

here, but blame little good it'll do 'im. 'Do right' in this God-forsaken country. They's one good reason fer being on the side of the Devil. He'll help 'is own. Un it seems to me that a mess o' wimmin's in the world jist tu make it easy fer th' old boy. They shore kin make hell fer a man, 'f yer hearin' me.

"They's a lot more here from his sisters un a kid brother un some from his gurl. She's givin' him the same guff as the ol' womern. Oh, they'll fix 'im. Leave it tu the wimmin every time. 'F th' hull shottin' match ain't on the devil's pay-roll the Ol' Boy's cheatin' 'em out o' ther wages, 'f yer hearin' me!" and the speaker looked as if he meant what he said.

"I ain't through yet," he explained, turning to enter the house again. "I gotta put these things back in shape and look over some more papers. So keep yer eyes open."

"All right, pard, I'm not a bit sleepy." Ward's disgust for Weems was clear from both speech and manner.

"I'm mighty near sick though," he resumed. "But keep it up, old blister heels. I'm probably wider awake than you think," and he picked up a tool and proceeded to work on the fence. Hearing the noise Weems came to the door with manifest concern.

"Now, Cal," he admonished again, "fer hell sake don't fergit yer job. 'F you see 'im comin' give three hard raps on the fence with the hammer. I don't want to be s'prized while I'm 'making myself to home.' "

"Go ahead, go ahead," Ward retorted a little testily, "I'm on the job. He's got to come across that cleared land for a quarter of a mile and I'll have plenty of time to give you the hunch before he gets here."

"Here's one frum his kid brother," said Weems, indicating a letter he held in his hand, "tellin' him he better cum home cuz his gall's dude cuzun's comin' from sum wher un bringin' a collige chum and wants her tu promise to be very nice tu 'im. Oh, she'll be nice tu the collige dood, he c'n bet on that. 'F they's

a worse combination than a mess o' wimmin its a bunch uv 'em with a collige dood fer seasonin'. 'F that ain't a puddin' uv th' Devil's own make he at least worked up the 'makins' un scoured hell fer th' in-greed-yints," he went on. Then looking the way Keith had gone, "Ol' boy, 'f yer thinkin' yer makin' this ranch tu pasture that gal yer off yer base thirteen ways tu once," he said. "If that there cousin o' her'n tows that dood into camp you got 'bout as much chance as a taller-legg'd dog chasin' a asbestos cat through hell."

"You'd better quit reading that stuff, Weems, it'll give you hydrophobia," Ward warned.

"Hydro—hell! 'F I'se ever up aginst the choice of bein' bit by a womern er a mad dog I'd choose the dog un promise him a hunk a fresh beef tu take the taste out o' his mouth," and he disgustedly turned and re-entered the cabin.

"He'd sure need it," said Ward, to himself. "It's quite evident that being bit by a woman has given him something worse than hydrophobia. The dog that bit him would get hydrophobia if he never had it before, and it would take more than beefsteak to get the taste out of his mouth, believe me," and he resumed work on the fence.

After a time Weems again appeared at the door excitedly, and with a partially written letter in his hand.

"The dood's done it," he said impressively, "What'd I tell yu? That dam' dood's done it. Listen tu this—he's writin' tu his mother"—and again he read laboriously:

> "Perhaps it was no more than her duty to be nice to her cousin's chum. Is that any reason why she could not be nice to anyone else? It's quite clear that her notions, and likely her ideals, have undergone a change."

"Didn't I tell yu? That dood's done it. Next tu a womern a collige dood's the devil's best tool, un with

the two tu-gether the Ol' boy c'n shore pry the lid off hell un prop it wide open.

"His mammy wunts him to write tu the gal un make up agin, but will he? Well, I guess he will—*not!*" and he turned again and entered the house while Ward resumed work on the fence. After some minutes Weems again looked out of the door.

"Git the burros, Cal," he directed, "I'm through with the fambly album and didn't wake the baby nuther. I didn't know it was a ortagraf album I wuz tu entertain muself with. It waz pruty interestin' though, and let me tell yu when the baby" (nodding in the direction whence Keith had gone) "does wake up it's gonna stir up the hull fambly. I'm gonna give 'im a cramp ut'l make plain colick seem like a cool drink in a dry belly," and he proceeded with the business of laying out the pack outfits, walking painfully and grimacing.

Ward brought in the burros and they proceeded to pack up.

CHAPTER XXIII

PLAYING THE BOB-TAIL FLUSH

"WHAT'S yer game now?" questioned Ward as they worked at replacing the packs. "Fry'll be madder'n a slapped hornet if we don't find some way to clear this nester out."

"Oh, I got that all fixed up." Weems's look was sinister and confident. "I got one o' them there notises like Frye had Jackson post on that Mormon's place over on the north end." Producing a paper, he read:

> "To whom it may concern: This is to notify you that this land is owned and held by the undersigned by virtue of a scrip filing duly of record in the U. S. Land Office at Prescott, Arizona, and is under lease to the Bar-T Cattle Company. Any further occupancy hereof or placing or maintaining of improvements hereon will be treated as trespass and subject such occupant or occupants to prosecution for damages. Anyone claiming any improvements hereon is hereby notified and warned to remove such improvements within thirty days, the period allowed by law.
>
> (Signed) John T. Cummings."

"But I doubt if this guy'll fall for that sort of bluff," said Ward.

"Bluff hell! 'F you think ole Jake Frye can't make that stick yu gut a nuther guess comin'. He put it over with that Mormon, didn't he?"

"No, I don't think that the notice had much effect on the Mormon. It was the menace of Black Behannan and the Mexican that got the Mormon. He knew he'd have to fight or get out, and, as he told Frye, it was better to *be wronged* than *do wrong,* so he accepted a pittance for his improvements and pulled out. I'm not so sure this lad's going to do that."

"Then he'll git out 'uthout anything for his improvements. The whole country's unsurveyed un Frye's got the Land Office fellers fixed so he c'n put scrip

wherever he wunts tu and move his filings when he pleases."

"I should think he'd get caught up with some day. The government has secret agents around the country these days and some fellers have already got caught."

"The gov'ment man thet ketches Jake Frye u'll have to get up before bed time, un not walk in 'is sleep nuther, I'll tell yu that. You don't see Jake Frye's name signed tu none uv them there notices, do yu? Un as fer 'John T. Cummings'—I guess if a gov'ment man looks fer John un ever finds such a person it'll be up tu John tu explain hisself—wunt it? Oh, they's pleasanter ways tu kill a skunk thun settin' on it, un Jake Frye's the guy thet kin git his skunks put out o' th' way 'thout gittin' stunk up in the operation."

Ward looked significantly at Weems, who was busy with the pack rope.

"Makes it skunk kill skunk, eh?"

"That's it edzakly," Weems answered confidently, ignorantly oblivious of the innuendo. "Then he don't even hev tu stay in the same country with 'em, un when th' stink's all blowed over he comes back lookin' like a cheatin' deekun on his way tu prayer meetin'."

Looking at Ward and laughing, Weems went on: "Gee, that's put nigh po'try. Yu c'ud put a toon to it un sing it," and suiting action to the words he started a sort of jig step as he chanted: "Cheatin' deekun on his way tu meetin'!"

"Gee-humphry-gad-zook-ins-Molly-Muggins!" he finished, grimacing with pain. "I'll bet them damn blisters reaches clean up tu the calfs uv my laigs. If they'd all bust tu wunst it ud drowned me. Un I'll bet they's cactuses enuf in my shins tu supply Hell with tortures fer a year—fer all but the wimmun."

"I understand there won't be any women in hell," Ward remarked.

"Huh?" grunted Weems, with the emphasis of surprise and disgust, "Then it'll not be hell!"

After a pause, "Where'll they be?" he asked.

"They'll all go to heaven, of course," said Ward.

"Huh! then I know where I'm a-goin' all right—all right!" said Weems with finality.

"Aren't we going to thank the gentleman for his hospitality?" Ward asked, when the packing was completed. "It'll look rather raw to pull out this way, won't it?"

"Yu betcher life we're gonna thank 'im. Thet fambly ortagraf album wuz shore sump'n tu be thankful for," said Weems. "Un' b'sides I gut sump'n tu hand Mr. Nester ut'll shore nuf 'wake the baby,' less un I didn't read the ortagraf album right. Readin's 'bout th' on'y part uv my edgacashun that's ever ben much use tu me, un readin' fambly history is wher I shine. I'm gonna hand 'im this notice and tell 'im that guy as jest left here done ast me to hand ut to 'im un if that don't set hell apoppin' then the fambly album lies, un nun o' my edgacashun ain't wu'th nothin'."

"But don't you suppose that man will deny it?"

"Dun-ny hell! He wunt git the chanst. The nester wunt ast him. He's too hot headed. That feller ut jist left here is Lewis Ames, a friend o' this feller's, un when one friend gits that kind uv a jolt frum a nuthern, they ain't no explanations goes. He'll just fly off'n the handle un spit in Mister Ames's face 'f he trys tu explain, er else my edgacashun's *all* wasted un I can't even read a fambly ortagraf album. 'F they's anything that's a bigger fool combination 'un a hot headed man un a proud one thet's mad ut each uther I don't know whut it is—lessen it's a mess o' wimmun in the same frame o' mind—un thet's shore the limit."

"I'll admit I'm a playin' a 'busted flush' this hand," Weems resumed after a short pause, "but it's a one-card draw, un a bob-tail flush beats openers fer a bluff hand in a Jack-Pot like this if yu gut th' nerve with ut," he said, looking up the canyon. "Here 'e comes, un 'f yu've got the nerve jist stand by un watch whut kin be did with a bluff hand—with a good bluff hand, un a little nerve. The fambly album tells me

I'm goin' agin a hand 'bout th' size uv a pair uv deuces after th' op'ner's chucked the bet un quit."

"Now you keep a stiff upper lip," warned Weems, a moment later as Keith came nearer, "er else beat it. No quiverin' here."

A moment later Keith arrived, carrying his shovel and with his boots besmeared with mud.

"Well, Mister Keith, we're much-a-blige to yu," said Weems, cordially offering his hand. "We've rested some un'll hev tu be goin'. 'F they's nuthin in th' way o' placer showins here-abouts we'll hev tu beat it tu whur they is. We bin in civilization lately tul our roll's on'y bout th' size uv a two munt's grubstake, un we got ta find the shiney sum wher's, lessun we wunt tu spend next winter in the calliboose."

Company in Shinimo was not plentiful and Keith would have been pleased to have had his visitors remain longer.

"Well, gentlemen, I'm very sorry you won't stay at least till morning," he said. "You're mighty welcome."

"Thank yu sir, thank yu," Weems returned politely, "I guess we'll be goin' on."

"Well, I wish you luck," said Keith, "better than you'll find on Shinimo."

"Thank yu, sir, th' same tu yu," Weems answered with politeness, and started off after the burros, then turned suddenly. "Oh, by the way—ux-scuse me," he said apologetically and as though some vexed with himself, "I put nigh fergot. That guy ut jist left here ast me tu nail this up here sumers but I guess it'll be just as well tu give it tu you," and fumbling in his pocket he handed Keith the fake notice.

"I speck he's one o' them dam Bar-T's" he said as though sort of worried about it. " 'F that outfit gits after yu, yu bout as well throw up the sponge. I've hearn uv them. That ol' Jack Frye's gut a stand in uth th' gov'ment un they say ut don't do no one no good tu fight 'im. He has a way o' gittin' fellers tu help 'im un makes it dam hard on the nesters."

Keith unfolded the paper and glanced at it incredulously.

"Did you say Lew Ames gave you this to give to me?"

"Th' guy on th' horse ut left here jist 'fore we come tole me tu post it up here on your place," Weems replied almost sorrowfully. "Don't know 'is name—never ast 'im. I think he's a Bar-T, though. Likely Ol' Frye's usin' 'im fer some dirty work. He acted like it all right," and with a look of sorrowful solicitude Mister Weems turned and walked away after his companion and burros.

Keith stood in an attitude of amazed incredulity for some minutes, glanced again at the paper, then, with a determined look in the direction Ames had gone.

"So that's where you stand, is it?" he said, the tone varying from surprise to determined anger. "Because my place promises much better than your's you'll help drive me off, will you?"

He paused again, a look of pain passed over his face, a look of saddened disappointment, a pause, and then—

"Lew," he said, "oh, Lew! you *couldn't do a thing like that!*"

And to the credit of Judson Keith be it said that faith in his friend withstood the shock of false accusation, for, he said to himself, he would not believe Weems—unless circumstances seemed to verify his words. But, alas! when even friendly eyes look for verification of slander's slimy words how prone they are to bias, especially when misunderstanding adds its weight to cunning innuendo and in remote allusions finds things that sprout suspicion—a thing that sucks up poison—with roots that reach to hell.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE "MAVERICKS"

WHEN Ames arrived at the Ferry the man in charge was too ill to go to the Trading Post to meet Mr. Frye, and as there wasn't another person that could undertake such a trip there was no alternative but for Ames to go on. He was quite at home driving, and being provided with a good team and a light spring wagon he set out for the trading post on the Navajo Reservation in the country of the great "Painted Desert." As he rode along he studied the scenery, partly for pastime and partly with a view to describing it in a letter to the Keiths, with whom he corresponded as frequently as circumstances would permit. The more he studied the details the more he became impressed with the wild, grim splendor of the sight. To the east, Echo Reef, a long, zigzag, gashed, and crumpled red granite bluff shut off the view. Behind, to the north and off to the west, lay that great natural wonder of the world, the Grand Canyon, such a stupendous crack in the earth's surface that it seemed that just there the world could easily fall asunder with the slightest shock. Beyond it the terraced red granite and white sandstone formations lapped and folded over each other. It was as though that portion of the earth were roofed with gigantic varicolored tiles up through which the great Kaibab Plateau had thrust itself like the back of some huge reptile that had been buried beneath to partially struggle out and then succumb in the throes of the futile effort. In front, to the south, the undulating country rose gradually for some thirty miles, then dropped away in numerous terraces to the Little Colorado where the formation suddenly changed from red, white, blue, and yellow, to brown and glistening black. Then the country rose again to culminate in the distant blue-based and snow-capped

San Francisco Peaks, behind which the Santa Fé Railroad threaded its way through the great Coconino Forests to drop deviously down into the great Yavapai Desert. Occasionally Ames saw herds of antelope scamper from the open flats to hide away in the tiny buttes that broke the monotony of the undulating surface. Streaks of dust in the distance showed where bands of wild mustangs dashed from the water pockets in some hidden canyon to the screen of the scattering pinyon and cedars that fringed the higher country. He framed descriptive sentences one after another only to fling them away again as entirely inadequate and, finally, between exhaustion of descriptive words and a sense of the impossibility of any adequate written description, he abandoned the effort with the correct conclusion that the scene was not describable in words. One must see it to understand.

At noon he fed and watered the team, drawing the water up some forty feet from the "tanks" in the head of a "box" canyon. It was late when he reached the Trading Post and he saw nothing of Mr. Frye nor his company that night. The distance back to the Ferry was such that, with the additional load, it was necessary to start very early, a fact understood by Mr. Frye and the host, as well as by Ames. Accordingly Ames was up at four o'clock, and had the team in complete readiness at a quarter to five, although expecting to wait until near six for the start. The stable man had told him that there was a "woman in the party, and a kid." Ames took that to mean a mother and child and wondered if he was mistaken in the impression he had gained that Mr. Frye was unmarried.

It had just come good daylight and he was going from the stable to the house when he heard a ripple of merry girlish laughter up at the spring back of the house. A huge boulder, the size of a house, that sometime in the past had fallen from the overhanging cliff above, completely hid the spring from view so he could not see the girl, nor discern the object of her mirth.

Again the laugh rang out, full and merry without being coarse, and Ames sensed a wish that the young lady would come out into view and also the notion to saunter up to the spring—oh, just to be sauntering. The sudden materialization of the wish did away with the notion.

"Don't, Sis!" came from behind the boulder in a whining, boyish voice. There was another ripple of laughter, then—

"Darn you, 'Neve'. I'll drown you—!" and from behind the boulder dashed the mirthful perpetrator of the laughter and of whatever was provoking the boy to his peevish threat. She was followed by a fairly well aimed stream of clear spring water, evidently dashed from some vessel in the hands of the boy, well enough aimed for a portion of it to strike the girl, wetting the side of her face and splashing her shoulder. The scream that followed was nearly as merry as the laugh into which it merged. A stripling of a boy, probably fourteen years of age, appeared for the space of a second around the corner of the boulder, a large dipper in his hand, only to turn and flee as the girl started after him.

"Now I *will* duck you, Elmer Price!" she shouted as she dashed after the boy with a speed and spirit that Ames would have bet would make the threat good. From behind the boulder came shrieks of laughter sufficiently irregular to indicate that some tussle was going on.

"Neeve, NEEVE!" yelled the boy with a note of fright in the plea that told all too plainly that Ames would have been entirely safe on his bet.

Presently they came around the boulder into view, the boy with hat in one hand and a towel on his head. The girl had the dipper in one hand and the boy's arm in the other.

"Now, you make a whimper and I'll sure put you in that spring head-first-and-all-over."

The look on the boy's face indicated that he didn't

doubt it and he made a fairly successful effort to live up to his intention, not to whimper.

"We must scoot for breakfast—"

She looked up and saw Ames for the first time, blushed and said "good morning" in a frank, but not bold way, then went into the house.

"Your children are early risers," Ames said to the host, who, with the pitcher in hand, came out of a rock cool-house nearby just as the door had closed on the two young people.

"Mine?"

The man stopped so suddenly that he almost dropped the pitcher.

"Gawd!" he ejaculated, something between a grunt and a sniff, "I thought they's *yourn!"*

Ames turned and looked at the door through which they had just vanished and didn't know whether he was glad or sorry that he had come to meet Mr. Frye and his "company."

The man discerned from Ames' surprised look that he didn't claim them.

"Must be Mavericks," he said, as he went on toward the kitchen door. "They shore ain't mine."

CHAPTER XXV

WHERE FLOWS THE STYX

AS they were sitting down to breakfast, Mr. Frye introduced Ames to the young people, and their relationship was made clear.

"Mister Ames," he said, "this is my niece, Miss Price. Geneva, or," he smiled, " 'Neeva' for short."

She smiled and held out her hand.

"You may know how really glad I am to meet you, Mr. Ames, when I tell you that we have been worried for four whole days for fear the team would not be here."

Ames was just a little disappointed. The statement seemed so entirely impersonal, so far as he was concerned, because the pleasure, she had frankly said, was from the fact of the rescue rather than credited to the one who rescued.

"I am delighted," he said, "to be the means of relieving you of the worry."

He said it with just a little bit of deliberate effort, in tone and inflection, to intimate that he understood it was the service and not himself that gave the meeting its element of pleasure. The readiness and completeness with which she caught the significance of his manner as distinguished from his words, made him utterly ashamed of himself. She looked up at him, the smile on her face gathered all into her eyes and—flickered out.

"My brother Elmer, Mr. Ames," she said, indicating the boy near her and opposite Ames, who sat with eyes and mouth wide open in a sort of amazed awe. Ames was wondering which would be the better form to acknowledge the introduction, "to Elmer" or to "Mister Price," when the boy threw him entirely off the track and left him silly and groping for some sane thing to

say to pull the conversation back into the realm of conventionality.

"Is—that—him?"

The boy spoke slowly and with rising emphasis on each word as he leaned back in his chair and sat staring at Ames in sheer but worshipful astonishment. Ames was dumbfounded, Miss Price was manifestly both shocked and amused, and Mr. Frye nearly broke a saucer by the suddenness with which he set down his coffee cup as he burst into a hearty laugh.

"Yes," Mr. Frye finally managed to say, through tears, and partially through his napkin, "Yes, 'that's *him.*'" and he shook his sides in another paroxysm of laughter.

At this juncture Miss Price undertook to enlighten Ames as to the meaning of her brother's words and manner.

"Uncle told us of some melee—" she began, when the boy dropping his napkin, leaned forward slightly and cut her off.

"Wasn't you scairt?" he asked, in the same manner and tone as before.

Each of the four looked at the other three, in a sort of pleading way, to come through with something sufficiently sane to break the suspense. It remained for Miss Price to start things going.

"Elmer!" she said, shocked reproof in her voice, but brimming mirth in her eyes. "For goodness sake, take up the slack in your lower jaw and see if you can move your eyes and quit looking like a clown doll. You're delaying breakfast—besides behaving most shockingly!"

With manifest effort the boy took his eyes off Ames and finished unfolding his napkin. But he kept glancing at his hero, the look of astonishment gradually giving way to one of pleased admiration.

The meal was finished some way, and as they were getting into the wagon the boy again brought up the subject of his chief interest.

"Lemme sit with Mister Ames," he pleaded, "so he can tell me about the Mexican—an'—an' bronky busterin'."

"You're going to sit in the back seat with me," his sister answered with decision, "and if you ask any more silly questions I'll throw you out—or—sit on you," she finished, eyes dancing and the corners of her mouth twitching with a curious mixture of mirth and indignation. Sensing the fact that diversion of the boy's mind into other channels was the solution of the present predicament Ames turned and spoke to the lad who stood sizing him up from head to foot.

"I'll bet you got a ducking in the spring this morning," he smiled.

"Y-e-s!" the boy took the bait readily. "Yes," he reiterated, "but Sis got a dipper full right in the ear—first."

"Yes," replied Ames, the smile dying out as he spoke, "but you want to remember, boy, that it's the *last* lick that does the trick. It's all in how you give, or take the last punch that decides whether you've got any thing to brag of—and if you have"—he paused and looked far off into the distance—"why—you probably won't do it."

They were in the wagon and moving now; and Ames realized that the expression sounded grandiose, to correct which he turned smilingly to the pair in the back seat:

"I heard you squealing," he said to the boy, then his eyes met the girl's for an instant. The entire absence of the usual ready mirth puzzled him, and all four occupants of the wagon fell into contemplation of the weighty wisdom of what Ames had said. If he could have known the thoughts of all or either of the other three it is a question whether he would have found consolation or increased perplexity therein.

They were jarred out of their reflectiveness by the sight of a coyote trotting curiously along, some distance ahead and to the right of the road. The boy

was all animation in a moment and wanted some one to shoot the varmint at once. His uncle vetoed the suggestion and not even Ames knew at the time that the attitude of the cattleman had its beginning and ending in the fact that sheep are hard on cattle range and coyotes kill sheep but are not particularly harmful to cattle.

When, some time later, they topped the divide where the country sloped again toward the great chasm to the north and west, the talk took much the form of a discussion as old as modern man's knowledge of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado.

"Anyone who can see," Mr. Frye insisted, "and who knows the hardness and the thickness of the 'marble ledge' alone, to say nothing of the half dozen others, simply must conclude that the Canyon is nothing but a great, big crack."

Ames was partial to the theory of erosion and Elmer got into the conversation with the declaration that the whole country "there," indicating that to the west, is higher than to the north, and ending with the clinching quesion many, many times stated by others before: "How did it get started over there?" Ames admitted that virtually none of the formations in the canyon were exactly horizontal, a fact proving a displacement some time, which, according to certain geological evidence, was subsequent to the beginning of the river erosion. Miss Price ended the discussion with the sage comment that if the river ran there before the displacement it might have eroded down to the marble, which cracked when the upheaval occurred which had formed the Kaibab plateau, now plainly visible off to the northwest.

They nooned at "the tanks" and near ten o'clock that night drove down the winding road to the bottom of the gorge. Here the stars and fleeting clouds were mirrored in the water of the Colorado River, which eddied a brief interval before its two hundred mile thrashing, seething, foamy dash through the Grand

Canyon. Ames fired a shot to give notice of their arrival to the waiting ferryman on the other side, whereupon Elmer, who had sleepily lounged over into his sister's lap—probably dreaming of fights between Mexicans and cowboys—nearly kicked through a wagon bow and jarred his sister's hat off in the suddenness with which he bolted upright.

" 'S'matter! Whuzzit!" he sputtered in almost pitiful fright, as he clutched at his sister, and, truth to tell, he was not the only one of the party somewhat startled. The team stood on a small beach or landing under a high overhanging bluff, which, acting like some mighty sounding board, magnified the sound many times and flung it viciously against a similar bluff six hundred feet across on the other side. It burst into a thousand fragments as it rumbled up the massive mountain walls, higher up and farther back, each particular fragment again magnified and hurled vengefully back into the jagged face of the opposite wall, there to be cast forth to meet and mingle with a thousand of its kind in one awful, rattling roar of clashing reverberation. The horses, being used to it, did not bolt as Ames feared, nor did the overhanging cliff fly to pieces and fall upon them as it seemed that it must.

When the tumult of sound was dying down—or rather up—for the reverberation seemed to be floating away upward and backward, to hide away in the far mountain recesses, a lantern appeared across the river and, after a period of flexuous dancing in the darkness of the canyon's depth, settled to a steady course, evidencing that the boat was coming.

"Charon on the Styx. If—I—ever!" said the girl in the rear seat.

"What's he doing that for?" came in a shaky boyish voice.

"Doing what?"

"Carrying on the sticks?"

There was a ripple of girlish laughter which moved Ames to remark that there was still a chance of salva-

tion. He was glad the stupid boy immediately asked "Why?"

"The presence of an angel, the proof of hope," Ames replied, not sure whether the idea was original or whether he was quoting. Then occurred to him the futility of throwing compliments to a young lady in the inky darkness when she did not say anything in reply. Verily, there are blushes other than those of flowers in desert places, doomed to go "unseen" and to "waste their sweetness." Furthermore, Lewis Ames did not know that his little, playful compliment was near to being both a curse and a prophecy. He could not know that one who did beguile in Eden with intent to curse the world had shown those simple words to Jacob Frye, *black with curse of hell,* nor that Frye had seized the sinister suggestion from *him* who asks no thanks from those who work *his* baneful will.

Verily there were persons in that party nearer Styx that night than they had ever dreamed and, yet withal, who must go nearer still, where none but guardian angels ever reach to help or save.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN CUPID SHOOTS AND HOOTS

THE party stayed over one day at the Ferry and in two more were at Bar-T headquarters. Ames was puzzled and not a little annoyed at the small amount of work there seemed for him to do. In fact, he had to set virtually all his tasks for himself. He also discovered soon that Miss Price's main, if not her sole purpose in coming on the ranch was for the development of her brother who had evidently spent his life in circumstances and environments which had tended to make him a sort of hot-house plant, or a "sissy" as it would be termed by boys of more robust physique and more rugged manner of life. Having discovered this motive and sisterly regard, Ames quite naturally lent himself to the task of serving Miss Price and the boy by seeking out ways and means to give the boy such opportunities and experiences as would meet his sister's aim.

Not many days after their return to the ranch headquarters, Mr. Frye, with an air of some importance and a tinge of mystery, summoned Ames to his little den and informed him that he was leaving the following day for a ten-day trip to the settlements in Utah, possibly as far as Salt Lake City. He was greatly perplexed at the necessity of leaving Geneva on the ranch, and the only vestige of comfort he got out of it was in the fact of Ames' presence and the confidence he reposed in him. He would arrange matters, he stated, so that Ames would receive no assignments that would take him away on any trips where it would not be possible for Neeva to go along, and would he be so kind as to accept the responsibility? It would be a favor to him personally as well as to both the girl and her brother.

Mr. Frye left as planned, first impressing his niece

with the degree of confidence he had in Ames and directing her to look to him for such assistance, counsel, or protection as she required. The result was to destroy much of the element of romance in the association of the two, and introduce in its place a sort of artificiality which was, after all, better for both, for it brought into play more of judgment and less of mere sentiment in their observations of each other. When he first saw her that morning at the Trading Post, Ames had judged Miss Price to be about sixteen. At the breakfast table he thought somewhere around twenty, and did not know whether the sensation was one of pleasure or otherwise when she told him frankly that she was twenty-four. He had long held to the conclusion that the true type of beauty was the blonde or auburn. His acquaintance with Miss Price was rather shaking his allegiance to that opinion. The calm, dispassionate manner with which he viewed her, due to the responsibility that had been placed upon him, had made his interest almost brotherly in type and tone, and yet there was the distance and the newness of acquaintance to lend interest to observation and aid in fair and frank appraisement.

On the other hand, the young lady had, also, all these advantages. Her only, or at least her main, perplexity was in not knowing exactly to what extent Ames' many kindnesses were from sense of obligation imposed by her uncle, and to what extent attributable to innate manliness and real, personal interest. Upon weighing the matter she was forced to the conclussion that it made no difference—unless—she— and then she was perceptibly shocked by the undeniable, irresistible fact that *it did make a difference.*

The girl was genuinely surprised, really disturbed—she could almost say, frightened—to discover the extent to which she had been unconsciously letting her life's course, in some mysterious subtle way, intertwine with that of Lewis Ames. In all honest candor she had to admit that somehow she had, innocently

and unknowingly, yielded something of herself; something that was sacred; something she was afraid she should have kept and yet which she would rather give than recall; something which, maybe, she could not recall—nor yet do without.

Direct, self-poised, and yet without the slightest taint of that egotism that sometimes tarnishes the finer qualities, she saw her predicament clearly; she resolved to brace herself against the present trend of things and keep the proper balance between sense and sentiment. To do this, of course, meant that sense must be the wider awake while sentiment must be cloaked, and it may be that Satan grinned in most sardonic glee, for, though cast forth in times long gone, there had been other Edens into which, in serpent's guise, he oft had wormed his way. And, then, perhaps Dan Cupid saw more clearly of the things that were to be, and dimpled with a knowing smile that meant that after all the love that has to prove itself by sacrifice is worthiest to live, while love that wants the easy path may grow sickly and die—or turn to hate.

And so it came about that Geneva Price set out to prove to herself that Lewis Ames was nothing to her but a friend; and it also came about that Lewis Ames noted the changed air and manner of the girl and wondered and pondered; and in the pondering declared that it made no difference to him. Naturally he discovered that it did make some difference, in fact, quite a lot of difference.

When he had admitted this to himself, Ames first went very cautiously back over his past life and minutely examined everything he could think of in the nature of an obligation, to see if there was anything, in any way whatever, to militate against admitting to himself his interest in Geneva Price. He found absolutely nothing. On the contrary, he saw in the frank admission of his regard for Miss Price, a sure means of clearing the way for his friend Keith and

Janice Kane. Keith would have the concrete proof of the termination of any actual attachment for Janice and Janice would have the sole obstacle removed that might stand in the way of complete surrender to Keith —a happy consummation for all concerned.

In the forward look, Ames found the way blocked with some perplexities. One, at least, seemed almost insurmountable. In the first place he knew absolutely nothing of Miss Price's situation. She was of an age and possessed of such charms as made it quite probable that she might have some prior attachment that would hold her against the possibility of affection for another. And at this point Ames realized the magnitude that such an obstacle might attain. Who was he that any woman should entertain any special affection for him, especially one reared and as experienced as Geneva Price? What had he in the way of past accomplishment or of future prospect to recommend him to any woman? Contemplation of that phase of the matter made him morose, and left him in about the poorest possible frame of mind to approach the problem in its other and still more perplexing phase. He had dedicated his life to a certain task or at least so much of it as was necessary to the accomplishment of that task. Should he waver now when self-interest beckoned from a new and unexpected angle? Perhaps the two purposes were not incompatible. He must find that out first. Yes, and to do that he must see to it that in going forward he was not surrendering anything of his purpose nor involving himself in such a way as to give advantage to the adversary he knew he must certainly combat. He had already seen that there was not the faintest probability that Jacob Frye would take him into his confidence or give him any place of advantage in his plans, beyond what was to Frye's own advantage.

In this connection, Ames recalled both Frye's words and manner when giving Geneva into his charge. But for the fact that it was unthinkable as in any way

applied to the girl, he would have been suspicious of those words and that manner. Plainly Ames saw the need for caution, which, added to the perplexities of the other phase of the problem, made it one to challenge the best efforts of a real man. He would go slow, Ames told himself. Yet he did not know just what he meant by that, and he was not reckoning with the little blind god who laughs at locks and bars, though they may be of mind or heart, and who, betimes, will scorn to wait upon the plodding gait of thought, but cracks the windows of Will, while stern Reason stands watchful guard at the door.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE STAMPEDE

MR. FRYE'S stay was longer than expected. Finally a courier came from Kanab with a telegram directing that the steer herd be started north. Ames was needed on the trail and so it was planned to trail the light spring wagon behind the mess-wagon for milady's boudoir, especially as it was wanted at Kanab for Mr. Frye's return to the ranch. Geneva rode horseback with the herd much of each day and dozed in the carriage when she chose. Ames, now virtually his own boss, kept watch of the wind currents and kept her placed so that she was out of the dust of the trailing herd. At night the light wagon was uncoupled from the mess-wagon and pulled to some partially secluded spot a little distance from the main camp. When meals were preparing 'Neeva' would lend a helping hand to Sam, the good-natured cook, who in return would fix her portion with unusual care. At night she would stay with the herd until the men had had their supper; and once, for the novelty of the thing, she stayed through the first shift. She was always insistent that Elmer should do some share of actual work each day; once she made him ride a night shift.

By the afternoon of the third day the herd, previously so wild and nervous but now footsore from the hard and angular rocks that strewed the entire top of the plateau, and still tired from the grinding climb of two days previous, wound its way down the mountain trail and out on the rolling foothills. The trail skirted the mountain's western base and on down the winding, shallow canyon to a little white sage flat. This flat was selected for the night's holding-ground because of the absence of rocks, thus giving opportunity for the cattle to rest their sore feet. It is a fact almost

astonishing to experienced cowmen how wild cattle will run for years on rough rocky range and then get terribly sore-footed when massed and herded a day or two on the same character of ground.

As a shelter from a slight wind that was blowing and to be near wood for the cook's fire, camp was pitched about a quarter of a mile farther down the flat at the foot of a small butte, fairly well covered with scrubby timber.

During the lull in conversation characteristic of the forepart of the meal one of the men with the cattle was heard singing.

"Perk's puttin' 'em to bed early," remarked Lippy, never at a loss for something to say.

"He better not tuck 'em in too snug," Eager suggested.

Young Price wanted to know why.

"Because the're apt tu have the nightmare." Then noticing the look of disapproval on Miss Price's face, Eager went on to explain that tired cattle were disposed to sleep and sleepy cattle were apt to stampede, a probability which was increased if the herd was held too closely massed.

Perk was singing again:

"My Bonny lies out on the ocean,
My Bonny lies out on the sea—"

"Some liar," said Lippy. "I wonder if Bonny'd tell the truth 'f they'd let 'im land?"

There was a laugh at this sally.

Some one else saw a camp-fire miles away to the north, and called attention to the fact.

"Some sheep herder, er wood hauler from the settlements," another volunteered.

José, the Mexican, in the capacity of wrangler, came to the wagon to notify the men that he had the saddle band in the V formed by two washes a little distance away. The night shift went to change their horses. Ames was among the number, and as he got up to

leave he suggested to Elmer that he make his bed under the light wagon in which his sister slept, giving as an excuse for the suggestion that it sometimes stormed unexpectedly during the night. It was an *excuse* but not a reason. If pressed for a reason Ames could not have given a better one than that he thought Miss Price might possibly feel just a little more secure. Down in his heart was the heaviness of a wish to do something for her, to serve her in some way. She would not be of the party the next night, as the "leaders" of the mess-wagon team would take her on to Kanab under the guidance of the man who had come out some days before with the telegram. Ames' heart was heavy with the fear that she might suddenly take a notion to go on north, and thence to her eastern home. He went to take his shift with the herd, accompanied by Eager and Lippy, the three to be relieved at midnight by Hudman, Pud, and Gratton, the messenger. With the arrival of the three men at the herd, Ingle, Perkins, and a man whom Ames had never heard called anything but "Dutch," dashed for camp. Bed was very welcome to them, as they had been in the saddle nearly twenty hours, or since the beginning of the second shift the previous night.

Separating, the three men taking charge of the herd arranged themselves about equal distance from each other and began to ride quietly around the tired cattle. The men only varied their relative positions when a movement at some particular place seemed to require, or while one or the other, usually Eager, rode cautiously in among the cattle to stir them up when too large a proportion seemed to be sleeping.

Thus the night dragged on. Ames was down in the dumps for a spell, then building air castles that had more foundation in a mere nameless longing than in reason or fact, and which his own erratic moods would shake again into shapeless, tumbled ruins. It was a recurring search for the path of duty with the haunting dread that it would swerve away from where the

heart would long to lead, or love to stay. Near to the conclusion that he had failed in his hope to curb his feelings toward Miss Price until he was sure of the way that duty led, Ames was hugging to himself the hope that in some way he would be spared the necessity of too dire a choice—or, if that necessity did come—that he might have the wisdom and the strength to choose the right.

At a quarter of one Lippy went to camp to call the second shift. A few moments later a man from camp rode around to the far side of the herd and relieved Eager. Hudman arrived a few minutes later, but Ames lingered for a half-hour, and at precisely two o'clock he was sitting on the side of the little butte still not sure whether it was worth while going to bed. The wind of the previous evening had died down and the near mid-summer night was as calm as the fragment of moon, or as the stars among which it floated. Ames decided that he would go on into camp; he had mounted his horse when it occurred to him that the herd was rather more quiet than it had been allowed to become while Eager was there and he thought of returning to suggest that it was not best to let the herd get too quiet. He knew that Hudman was an experienced cow-hand and that his judgment ought to be relied upon. He knew, moreover, that the latter might resent any suggestion, especially from him; and so he started again for camp. He had ridden less than half the distance down the gentle slope toward camp when there came a yell from up toward the herd, and turning he saw a huge dust cloud rolling up in the clear moonlight. It could mean only one thing—a *stampede!*

He was within calling distance of camp, so he fired three rapid shots from his pistol, rose in his stirrups, and shouted with all his might, *"Stampede!—Stampede!* All out!" Then he spurred toward the herd. He had but fairly started when, to his horror, he discovered that the herd was coming straight towards him, and in the very front of that mass of more than a thousand

big steers, Hudman on a large, brown, white-faced horse was trying to outrun the herd sufficiently to work to one side and out of the course of the maddened hoofs and horns.

The night horses used on occasions so favorable as the present one had seemed, are sometimes the poorest mounts a ranch affords and, partly on this account and partly because of his own bulk, Hudman was riding "Old Joe," a one-time splendid speciman and first class saddle horse, but now hampered by "Bad-knees," an affliction resulting from hard riding down steep, hard surfaces and which leaves the knees weakened so that the animal is very apt to fall when suddenly forced into a run. Ames saw Hudman gaining slightly on the herd and was crossing to the east when it burst upon him that either the herd had swerved or the course was not what he had first supposed; now the whole mass was going toward camp and straight as a shot for the little lone wagon a few rods to the west of the main camp. The men were up and some were mounting, others were running about, but no one seemed to go toward the lone wagon. Being nearly to the far side of the herd, to reach the girl Ames had to cross entirely in front of the oncoming avalanche, a feat easy enough in itself, if there were no mishap. But could he reach the wagon in time to get her? And then, there was the boy, sleeping in spite of the commotion, soundly beneath the same wagon. By the time Ames had dashed across the front of the herd the cattle were closer than he had supposed. The speed with which they came was astonishing. They were so massed that the little spindling wagon would be no more protection than a wicker chair. Furthermore, if he could reach it, there was the boy too. One horse could not carry three of them fast enough, even if there was time to get them. Again the conflict of expediency and duty—but, *what was duty?* What was possible? It came like a flash. As he dashed on he snatched his rope from the fork of

his saddle where it lay coiled, then shouted at the top of his voice, "Boy!—Elmer! hold on to the wagon! Hold on *tight—tight!*"

The boy raised as Ames dashed up. The trained horse sank his four feet deep into the earth with the impact of the sudden stop.

"Stay in—girl! Stay in!" Ames commanded, as he saw her making as though to jump.

Quickly he flipped the small half-formed loop of his lasso over the end of the double-tree, leaned low and caught the end of the tongue, threw a half-hitch around it, dug spurs into his horse, and away again! The saddle-horn smoked as he let the rope slip around it to prevent its breaking when the horse plunged forward and the wagon began to move. Luckily the flat ahead was comparatively free from brush and slightly down grade; for he *must* beat that sweeping avalanche of pounding hoofs and cracking horns sufficiently to veer away out of their path—do it at the minimum loss of speed and the greatest possible degree of angle. At an eighth of a mile he saw little change—a quarter, and there was a perceptible angle noticeable as he rode half turned in the saddle. Three hundred yards more and he could see improvement—then, in the dim moonlight he saw, little more than a quarter ahead, the low hills closing in from both sides and the flat terminating in a sort of canyon. He knew he must not plunge into that. Could he swing sufficiently in the intervening distance? *Could he!* There was no alternative, *he must!*

He began to veer more. The main mass of the herd was now to the right of him,—still more, and only a fringe of the herd trailed behind—still more—but the soil was softer and it was perceptibly up-grade. Plainly the horse was failing—winded—was actually reeling—could only make a trot at best. Ames slipped to the ground, intending to assist the straining horse, but, either from sheer exhaustion or interpreting his dismounting as permission to do so, the fagged horse stopped. The fringe of the herd was sweeping by,

but—the girl—*where was she?* He sprang to the front wheel to look behind the dashboard. Not there? Yes, there was a crumpled heap against the rear end of the box. As Ames sprang to the back of the wagon a huge steer, with an unusual sweep of the horns, struck the rim of the wheel next the herd, wrenching a horn, throwing the animal sprawling, and all but upsetting the wagon. Two or three of his fellow steers dashed over him before he got to his feet. Ames stood behind the wagon to meet the onrush, to—really, he did not know what for,—but he was dead sure *why,* for there, white-faced in the moonlight dimmed by the swirling dust, the girl's head lay deathly still on the tailboard of the wagon and a pair of white arms hung limply down; and there on the ground a boy whimpered and writhed from the rasping of the earth over which he had been partially carried and dragged. He had grasped the wagon as directed by Agnes but had not climbed in when the dash started; his sister had seized hold of him and, unable to pull him into the wagon, had carried and dragged him the whole way, only to faint from exhaustion and nerve strain when the peril had passed.

Very carefully Ames unlatched and lowered the end board, wrapped the limp figure in a blanket, made as if to kiss the still lips, restrained the impulse with great effort, and laid her gently down in the wagon. Stooping, he picked up the whimpering boy.

"Come, Elmer," he said firmly, but not unkindly, "*You're* not much hurt. Be a *man,* now, and help me take care of your sister. She's saved your life, now show that you're worth it."

The boy stood up and made a fairly creditable effort.

"Take my horse and go back to camp and bring some water," then, recalling that it might possibly be difficult to find much of that camp now, he changed his request.

"No, stay here, and I'll go."

And mounting he rode away mechanically. Head and hand could still take the hard course of duty, but his heart had found anchorage.

CHAPTER XXVIII

"WATER WON'T DO HIM NO GOOD—"

AT camp Ames found Lippy and the cook. Lippy's horse had bolted before he could get to it. He and the cook had saved themselves by running to the east out of the path of the stampede, and had just returned. The cook was scratching around among the wreckage to see if he could find his pants, while Lippy, not having removed his when retiring, was looking for a pair of number three boots. Before Ames reached them they called to know if anyone was hurt. He saw the mess wagon had been knocked about and was lying on its side, but not badly demolished. One of the water barrels had been crushed and another had been rolled some distance, but it was still gurgling when Ames reached it and stood it up. He had to search camp for a vessel that would do to carry any water and while doing so found one of Lippy's boots.

"If yu see anything that would make pants, let me know," said the cook, who was still walking about ensconced in more wrath than raiment.

"Git yuh a blanket 'n a gee-string 'n go it Navajo," Lippy suggested.

"Begins to look like I'd have to," the cook retorted as he pulled a camp quilt from the dirt.

By this time Ames had succeeded in partially pulling a badly battered camp kettle into shape. Filling it, he rode over to the tiny cedar that marked the previous location of the spring wagon. The boy's pallet was almost undisturbed, but the covers had been kicked along for considerable distance. He found no semblance of the boy's clothing and was starting on when he thought of looking under the mattress, still lying flat on the ground. Sure enough the trousers were there, flattened out on the under canvass as a

sojourner in a hotel sometimes places his beneath the mattress to preserve their shape.

"Huh," Ames exclaimed, "the boy was going on in tomorrow and thought creases were fashionable in Kanab."

He rolled up the clothing and was just in the act of mounting when he heard Lippy shout something. He looked up the flat.

"By Cripes!" Lippy declared, "there's a steer up there in the flat alone," and Lippy walked cautiously toward the animal. The dust was still afloat, but thin enough so that he could discern it was really an animal. Lippy called again:

"I b'lieve it's a horse," and he went nearer. "Yes, it is—it's ol' Joe!"

As the atmosphere cleared the horse was quite plainly visible in the moonlight. Ames reached him about the same time as Lippy, but neither paid any attention to the horse. They were interested in the object two rods farther on—Hudman, lying with his face crushed into the soft earth, arms spread out, and one leg swung around at an unnatural angle. Before Ames could dismount, Lippy had turned the head so the face was sidewise. Then he knelt and placed his ear to the lips. Ames approached with the battered kettle.

"Water won't do him no good," said Lippy solemnly, as he stood up.

Ames set the water bucket down and took two cartridges from his belt, drew his pistol, and handed it and the cartridges to Lippy, who took them in dumb surprise, and likewise stood holding them while Ames remounted.

"Joe's got a broken leg," said Ames as he turned his horse.

"No—you!—" Lippy started to protest, but Ames was dashing away.

The little man walked to the dust begrimed horse. It was plain the faithful animal had been trod upon

and trumbled about and, sure enough, one front leg was snapped and crushed between knee and ankle. Lippy looked away toward the distant mountain but did not see it as he loaded the revolver. Next he removed saddle and bridle.

"Ol' feller," he said, with a catch in his voice as he raised the weapon, "we all know that you done yer—yer—damdest—un it wuzn't your fault,—not a bit."

But he did not fire. Instead, he turned and started toward camp; walked a few steps and stopped. The cook was nowhere in sight.

"And then, besides, he might not want to do it—"

Lippy looked back at the horse and turned.

"It must hurt like all hell," he said, and stepped more briskly. His aim was steady as he again approached the maimed animal. At the flash of the gun Lippy threw his forearm across his eyes. There was a thud and then—quiet, and Lippy turned and walked away, swallowing hard.

At the camp the cook had just come in with an armful of wood. He was wearing an apron and a disgusted air, a shirt and yellow drawers, but nary a scrap of pants.

"What do you suppose a fool steer wants with a pair of pants?" he said, not a bit mirthfully, as Lippy approached.

"Why," and the little man spoke impressively, "they want a flag fer the procession when they git tu Hardscrabble."

He started to laugh at his own sally, but stopped suddenly.

"Kittle—er—Mister Hudman's dead," he said solemnly. "And so's Ol' Joe. Got'n front, it 'pears like."

Neither spoke again while the cook started the fire. As it slowly began to crackle and blaze up they stood opposite each other, solemnly gazing at the tiny flame. The cook, lost in thought, turned around. Lippy snickered; the apron didn't go all the way 'round.

"Say," and Lippy's tone indicated that he had struck an idea, "mebbe we can find yu a pair o' chaps un yu c'n wear yer apern b'hind." The cook spun around suddenly.

"Say!" he said with manifest concern. "S'pose he'll be bringin' that girl back here?"

"Z' apt to," Lippy answered, more from a mischievous desire to increase the cook's consternation, than from honest conviction. "Mebbe she'll lend you a skirt," he said.

The cook stepped around nervously.

"I can probably find 'em when it gets light," he hazarded as he turned and looked wistfully to the north. All of a sudden he whirled and faced Lippy again.

"Say!" he said again, this time with more animation and less concern. "Didn't I—?" He paused. "Yes, by thunder, *I did!* I had 'em when we started to run up the draw. I *know!* 'cause I was just going to put 'em on and then concluded there wasn't time and I didn't want to get myself hobbled with 'em." He started rapidly eastward again up the little sloping ravine. Manifestly his mind was more full of pants than they were of him. He turned again and called back to Lippy.

"Yessir!—" and he turned and threw up one hand in a gesture of emphasis, "I 'member *now*: when they hit the wagon and knocked 'er a rollin' I had 'em, 'cause I 'member I's *glad* I had 'em—" and away he went up the slope stooping and peering right and left, his lemon colored underclothes showing white in the moonlight. Pretty soon there came a gladsome shout from the direction the cook had gone, and presently he returned waving " 'em" like a child with some precious toy, his great relief evidencing most plainly the tense state of mind he had been in the last half hour.

"Now, if I just had another boot," Lippy observed, "I'd go see if I could find my horse un get busy. No tellin' where the boys'll hold that herd up nor how many they'll be shy when they do get 'em stopped.

They seemed to be holding together purty well last we saw of 'em, and the country's not overly rough un not much timber, so they'll likely hold most of 'em."

Lippy paused and sat looking into the fire thoughtfully for a while; then, observing that the cook was standing doing likewise, and still holding his recovered trousers in one hand, Lippy inquired if they were now so precious that he didn't intend to wear them.

"Er is it b'cause yer proud o' them yeller drawers?" he questioned, finishing with the observation that "they did look swell by moonlight" and that "the on'y thing that'd make 'em *sweller* would be a pair o' laigs in 'em 'stead of a coupla hinged cornstalks."

The cook held the trousers at arm's length and then looked at them caressingly as he proceeded to put them on. This completed, he looked around at the camp wreckage.

"If you'll rustle some horses, I'll see what I can gather up an' we'll get ready to drift on down. The boys are apt to be some hungry fore there's much for 'em if all the water's spilled."

He stopped suddenly and looked at Lippy.

"Did you say something about Hudman?" he inquired.

Lippy looked at him sort of disgusted.

"Gad!" he said, "can't yu hear or think either without yer pants on? I told you half hour ago that Hudman's dead un ol' Joe, too," and Lippy's expression softened.

"And what about the girl and the kid?"

"By cripes!" and amusement and disgust seemed to struggle for chief place in the little man's look and tone, "You shore are bad off when yer shy o' pants! Ames told us plain as shootin', when he came fer the water, that she wuz fainted but that neither one wuz hurt serious. Le's look 's more fer my boot an' I'll go see 'f I can find that fool ki'yuse. We're goin' tu need some horses 'round here purty bad." The two of them started another search for the missing boot.

CHAPTER XXLX

PATHS THAT TOUCH AND TWINE

AFTER Ames left the girl and her brother, the boy, nervous from the recent experience, longed for company. Sometimes the dense cloud of dust off there to the north looked to him as though it were coming back. He saw Ames' mounted figure grow dim and disappear in a little, white, streaky cloud of dust, and off to the west a coyote—or twenty of them—barked, the sound trailing off into a most weird and dismal howling moan. The boy wanted company, and was not sure whether he should try to arouse Neeva or merely watch over her. He wanted to be or do as Mr. Ames, his hero, would want him to, but his shins and feet smarted from the scratches and rasping. Off to the east now, another—yes, a whole pack of coyotes answered in like voice the challenge or joined in the lamentations of the clan to the West. It was possible —in fact, quite likely,—that they were signalling—plotting, perhaps; and he and his sister were right between them. Maybe he ought to wake sister. Very likely she ought to know. Of course he was there to look after her—but—it would very likely be best to—. The band to the west was nearer, it was plain to tell, and—maybe one—or some, were nearer than the ones signalling.

The boy climbed into the wagon, climbed quicker than he had intended, in fact, once his mind yielded to the impulse, he literally dived into the wagon. The impact started the lethargic senses of the girl. She opened her eyes drowsily and murmured something.

"Can they? Will they—?" the boy spoke excitedly, then paused. He was ashamed. The coyote had not spoken again. He took his sister's hand, then laid his own on her brow. She opened her eyes again, reached the hand and grasped feebly; withdrew it and began to sit up. The stiffness and the soreness brought her fully to consciousness.

"Elmer!" she said, clutching at him quickly, "you—is it you? Are you hurt? and—the—other—? Where is—is Mr. Ames?"

In spite of the pain and the stiffness in her shoulders and arms, she pulled herself up. Her near hysteria made the boy nervous.

"He's gone." The boy's voice showed fright and nervous strain. She must take command—of herself. She must get rid of the confusion—the haunting dread.

"Did he—? Did Mr. Ames come here? —bring us here?" she asked, striving to still her agitation.

"Yes," the boy began.

"Did anything—happen—? Where—?"

"One old steer bumped into the wagon—and—Mister Ames threw him just a tumbling an' s' more of them jumped on—"

She caught her breath.

"On!" the girl put in, excitedly.

"That one," the boy went on. He had not lied deliberately about Ames throwing the steer. He had been conscious that the brute had plunged at—at least toward, the wagon, had seen Ames spring at the steer with outstretched arms, but he did not know that the tip of the wide sweeping horn had caught the rim of the wheel, doubling the beast's head back on the side of the neck, just as one of his fellows struck him from behind.

"Some of the others fell over—that one, but they all went on," the boy finished.

"Then what—? where did—?" she knew what she wanted to say. She knew she was concerned, but wanted to seem more casual about it.

"Then he—Mr. Ames went on? Or—back? What did he do?"

Now was the boy's time to serve his hero, and incidentally himself.

"He wrapped you up—" Another "blush unseen," the sweetness of which was wasted "on the desert air" "—an' told me to take care of *you.* Then he went to

get some water—and—and my trousers—I hope, and my boots 'n' things."

That was reminder to the girl that it might be good to take an inventory of her wardrobe. In order to do this she offered to furnish Elmer the bedding if he would ensconce himself therein beneath the wagon. A startled look passed over the lad's face before he answered. The coyotes had made no noise for some time—and besides he had said he would take care of her—and she was awake.

Draping a blanket about him, the boy slid out the rear of the wagon, his sister, with grimaces from the pain of the strained muscles and tendons of her shoulders and arms, pushed the remainder of the bedding out. To her satisfaction she found that all her clothing was still aboard, but she missed a small toilet case which, left on a small chest, had bounced out of the wagon during the course of the exciting race. She dressed as quickly as possible, considering the condition of her strained shoulders and arms and the bruises and abrasions on her upper arms, neck, and chest that had resulted from contact with the edge of the wagon box as she had heroically held on to her brother during that race for life. A jacket of the boy's that had been hung underneath the wagon when he retired and had somehow lasted out the swinging, swaying ride, contained his comb. With this the girl tortured herself the better part of a quarter of an hour, in a quite successful effort to dress her hair.

Finally they noticed a spot of white dust in the distance and a few moments later Ames dashed up, greatly relieved by the girl's declaration that they were all right. She knew it was a time when men were needed for men's work and had no notion of concerning any one else with her own aches and pains. Pleading with her to be very frank in her statement of her conditions and needs, that they might be fully considered and, so far as possible, provided for, Ames made it plain that if there were other things requiring

immediate attention her own welfare had first place. She assured him that she was completely subject to whatever plans seemed best for all concerned, and begged Ames to direct her as to the course he desired her to pursue.

"I may as well tell you," he said, "because the facts are inevitable and must be known, that a serious accident has happened to one of the men and that the camp is pretty badly damaged. Most of the boys are with the herd and the Mexican had not come in with any horses. Of necessity, I must be busy and if you are in condition to permit it, I think I shall tow the wagon back to camp and plan operations from there."

She reiterated her statement that his plans were hers and that she was not at all hurt, whereupon they started on the return to camp. Lippy was away looking for his horse when they arrived, but the cook had picked up most of the camp equipment that was useable, and had taken an inventory. There was still most of one barrel of water, and sufficient provisions could be salvaged to provide a meal or two of some sort. Ames spoke to the cook, and the two of them left the camp together, taking with them a large piece of canvass and a blanket.

When they returned Ames mounted and rode off to look for horses just as the daylight was beginning to break. He returned in half an hour with the Mexican and the saddle-horse band. The cook had prepared a rather one-sided meal; and, shortly after, the mess wagon was righted, loaded, and made ready for travel. Before coupling on the light wagon, the team was driven up the flat a short distance and the men picked up a large, rather longish bundle rolled up in canvass and placed it carefully in the wagon. A saddle was also placed aboard and the wagon returned to camp.

Horses had been saddled for Miss Price and her brother, and Ames went to help the girl to mount. Taking her arm near the elbow, he attempted to aid her to rise in the stirrup when he was sure he caught

a little gasp of pain and recalled that the girl had moved her arms slowly as she reached up to the saddle. She did not rise as had been intended but turned her face away and leaned toward the horse. The wagon had started. He must know soon if she would prefer to go in the wagon.

"I hurt you!" he said with quick concern. "Shall I stop the wagon? Tell me, Miss Price, please? Would you rather—?"

She turned and smiled at him—through tears.

"Oh, I'm such a baby," she said, trying to look pleasant. It's—it's nothing."

In spite of her brave effort Ames could see the girl was in pain. His face showed concern—almost alarm. She smiled again, and, slowly, but with manifest pain, she raised her arms.

"They're a little—sore, my arms," she said, with a little catch in her voice, as she determinedly raised both, well up. "Just when I move them—upward."

He knew now, as he recalled for the first time the strain those two arms had undergone during that wild ride, how the after-effects must now be setting in with distressing pain. His eyes were mellow but his voice was stern as he spoke.

"I ought to have known," he said, with clear self-reproach, "I'll stop the wagon."

"No! that's not necessary," she protested quickly as he turned and was mounting his horse. "I—"

But he was galloping off. She stood a moment in self-condemnation for the weakness she had shown but grateful for even the desire Ames showed to minister to her comfort, then, leading her horse, she began to walk briskly toward the wagon. She saw a large bundle taken from the mess wagon and placed in the smaller rig and when she arrived the lead team was being hitched to the spring wagon. Very gently —more gently than she desired,—Ames assisted her to the seat and, tying his saddle horse to the side of the team, they drove away.

CHAPTER XXX

ANOTHER ROUND WITH CUPID

AS they drove along, Ames reached back and procured a soft blanket. Folding it, he placed it at her back. A little later he reached back for another blanket and laid it folded in her lap without saying a word. Gratefully she let the first blanket slip low enough to take the pressure from the strained and aching shoulders and as gratefully rested her forearms in the soft folds of the blanket in her lap, to rest and relieve the bruised and stiffening elbows. Meanwhile she wondered that he could know so well how she felt and what was most needed for relief. She had heard of him as strong, courageous, rugged, and stern when occasion required; she had seen him cool, earnest, and industrious, with a calm self-reliance that smacked not the least of egotism; and now she knew him to be quiet, thoughtful of others, and tender as a woman. She wanted to speak, but somehow speech seemed so inadequate, so limited by established standards of propriety and conventionality. But thought!—ah, conventionality could not fix bounds in that realm, and there heart could speak and hope hold revel in the unreal fields of *what might,* or *might not be!*

She knew a hero. Not someone to perform a feat half from accident and much from mere impulse, but with quick though accurate measures and yet in heroic disregard of personal consequences. One who, the good act done, could turn time and effort to the pursuit of duty and not waste time nor impugn motive by self-adulation nor the vain casting about for commendation. In other words, she knew a man—ay, a *man,* who saw, in sheer heroism, just plain duty. At home she had had little opportunity to observe men as men. The association there had been only social and, to her, after some acquaintance with the big, whole-souled

sociability of the rugged west, very superficial. There it had been only talk and she had the good sense, if not the actual experience, that told her that talk was cheap—about in the proportion that it was big. And now, after some sojourning in the west, where action was the rule, she could have little patience with a social creed or cult that based its existence upon, and found its sustenance in, talk. A devotee at the shrine of Action, she had come to distinguish between action dictated by self interest or a mere following of the crowd, and action that has its motive outside of self and calls upon judgment and soul. In Lewis Ames she saw the embodiment of this type; a man who had a conception of right, a sense of obligation all his own, and who never compromised with evil or with ease out of mere self-interest or because he did not think it worth while to weigh the consequences. The beaten pathway did not hold him beyond the point where his own active judgment discerned the veering away from right or best or better. The unassuming yet sound and decisive readiness with which he went his own straight way toward abstract or concrete right as he saw it had soon been noted by Geneva Price. It had been not only refreshing—that is, pleasing—but actually stimulating. Strong in individuality herself, she was surprised when her own candid discernment showed her how readily she yielded to his findings or rested upon his judgment; almost felt that with him present she need not bother about conclusions. Not because it mattered little but because he never discounted reason, cheapened its process by adulterants, or accepted substitutes. Her own natural independence made her really glad that she had discerned these qualities in the man before sentiment in any way influenced either her observations or her conclusions.

Unable to know the girl's train of thought, Ames felt that in the interest of sociability he ought to make conversation, although, truth to tell, he did not feel at all talkative.

"A penny for your thoughts," he said, as he turned and looked directly at her. She seemed to let go the thread of those thoughts reluctantly as she turned and looked into his eyes a moment as though puzzled.

"A penny?" she said, still looking at him, and with a slight emphasis of surprise. Then after a brief pause, as she slowly turned her face away again, "No,—not for a million dollars!"

She spoke slowly and there was decision in the tone at first that seemed to trail away into pathos at the last.

"And worth it, no doubt," he said with an effort at pleasantry, "But—I—" He paused, and now he looked away, and the smile faded out of his eyes, gathered all at the corners of his mouth, and changed to a sort of pathetic pucker as he finished—"But I haven't the—price, I'm afraid."

This time she turned more quickly.

"Then there's—" she began, but stopped, turned her face away and after another pause asked if the little green oasis miles to the northward was the settlement to which they were going. He replied that it was. Then the effort at conversation died away.

The thought that obsessed him was that she might decide, or had already decided, to go on home, and if so what could he say or do that might give hope of some sort of continued acquaintance? To press matters to any extent would be obviously unfair—ungentlemanly, at least, he reasoned, because it would appear as the hurried effort to indicate a claim for the recent service he had rendered—a plain duty, albeit one the performance of which had given him great satisfaction. He felt, however, that a casual reference or question tactfully injected into the conversation might attain the object he so much sought. If she were not going away he would be relieved of his chief perplexity, and if she were—, well, when he was sure he would decide the course to pursue. He didn't know what it would be. Head and heart were at war. The one saying duty, duty, duty first, and the other love

first; duty to rest upon love. This last appealed to him yet seemed somewhat sophistical. Didn't it smack of self-complacency? Wasn't it a fact, after all, that the truest love would not question duty, but ask duty's full discharge? Would it be love worth the name that sought its own ends first and sought the way of duty afterward? And again, wasn't it possible—in fact, quite probable—that if one surrendered to love first the path of duty might be difficult—very difficult? Ames wondered if there was any possible way by which one could tell for sure. Did love, in each individual case, ignore all other experiences and force a choice regardless of everything else? Was Cupid really blind and self-willed and reckless? In a good many instances appearances left no doubt of it, but was Cupid always so? Might one not, by the power of clear thinking, of reason or will, induce him to be consistent and to withold the shot or withdraw the shaft? If not, then, manifestly love must be a hard master. And so Ames pleaded and pleaded with the little blind god not to shoot—not to shoot now, but to give him time to see the path ahead. And all the while that dimpled cherub smiled mischievously and chuckled to himself: "Poor, poor, foolish man! 'Don't shoot,' say you? When the shaft is gone and lies so deep in your heart that I couldn't withdraw it if I chose. Verily, verily, how foolish these mortals be, especially when they would philosophize about love! For ever since in Eden's lovely bower I hid when Satan did entice their mother to Knowledge Tree and by his cunning guile persuaded her to pluck forbidden fruit, from out the branches of the Tree of Life I aimed the shaft that planted love where lust had meant to be,—I say, since then it's been my meed to plant the shafts of love the wide world o'er, nor wait on Will or Reason. And why? Because, when Will and Reason yielded to the tempter's wiles, Love fought on alone and still stayed true to all The Plan. Hence, not Will and Reason, now, nor all the imps of Hell, hath pow'r to thrust me

from the earthly sphere nor stop the mission I'm performing here."

Ames had to give it up, concluding, as did the girl beside him, that Cupid was stubborn and not very logical. These two people who had flattered themselves that their candid estimates of each other's good qualities were cold, clear, dispassionate *reason,* had found difficulty in making that vaunted *reason* keep the track of consistency when a little winged bowman bobbed up and said "boo!" Too bad, too bad, that they never caught the comforting thought that, though he might never surrender any of his prerogatives to Will or Reason, nevertheless Mr. Cupid liked their company and, rightly treated, had been known to let them take the reins for a short space. This is where the trouble starts every time. But these two people did not know that and turned the matter into a veritable tug of war, the man insistent that the chariot stop while he sent Reason ahead to reconnoitre the way; and the girl tugging on one rein in the belief that the team was leaving the course on a tangent. Is it any wonder that Cupid is mischievous? That's all that saves him from becoming a confirmed grouch or cynic. And so it fell out that when Ames said "Whoa!" Dan took off the brakes and let the breeching work, and when the girl said "gee, gee!" he just let her pull on that rein and answered "Ha, ha!" Exasperating, of course, but, come to think about it, it's the tragedies of life that remind us of its seriousness; and the seriousness that gives it promise, and leads to achievement. Just so love is freed of its dross and the corroding barnacles of licentiousness, and its true quality is shown by the heat and by the rough and narrow way it must traverse. And, yet, there be those who think they love who have never suffered! Ay, they *think* but they do not *know.*

CHAPTER XXXI

A MORGUE FOR DEAD HOPES—PERHAPS

SOME distance down the winding road they saw a lone horseman hastening towards them.

"Eager," said Ames, "coming back. That means the herd is quiet."

Before they met him the girl turned and looked down at the bundle in the wagon.

"Who is it?" she asked solemnly. "And how did it happen?" Ames explained the cause of the accident as well as he could from what he had seen and from the circumstantial evidence.

Eager's face showed relief at seeing the two alive and apparently uninjured, with the boy and Lippy riding behind the saddle band and José some little distance back.

Rising in his stirrups and leaning to peer into the wagon, he looked at Ames and the girl.

"Hudman?" he questioned.

Ames nodded.

"I was afraid of that when he did not show up with the herd at all," Eager went on. "I swung out and let 'em pass and saw all the others but you folks and him. How did you do it, anyway?" he asked, relief and concern mingled in his look.

Ames tried to look matter-of-fact.

"Beat 'em to—to the carriage and put my rope on it and yanked it to one side!"

"Straight in front too, wasn't it? Saw you start tu cross over but the point o' the herd un the dust hid everything fore yu got there. I knew you could git there but I didn't know whut yu c'd do then—bein' two of them," and the straw-boss was manifestly eager to get details.

"I just yanked the wagon along and *she* did the rest," Ames said. looking at the girl approvingly. "Grabbed

that boy and carried and dragged him behind till the wagon stopped."

"It's a wonder she could hold him, that way, and stay in," Eager volunteered. "Some grit, sure."

The girl said not a word, she could not explain it herself. She did not know: she could just recall the quick, determined spring to the back of the wagon, the fierce, firm clutch at the half-awake boy. The fact that the end-gate stayed latched was part of the explanation. A firm, unyielding, heroic grit to hold on, despite the torture of the iron-bound edge of the box rasping and hacking at arms, neck, and chest as the wagon had jostled over the ground, was the explanation now artfully hid by a heroic stoicism and a silken scarf. The heroine sensed this but could not have explained if she would, for every ounce of strength, every fibre of body, every faculty of mind had seemed swallowed up in the force of will to catch—to hold—hold at all hazard. When need of will had ceased, all had gone black and blank.

"I see Sam's coming, too," Eager said. "I'll go see what he's got. Have to fire this team on to the settlement and back to the herd with some water and provisions tonight, I suppose. How about it?"

Ames stated that such had been his conclusion. That was why he had hitched the rigs separately and was hastening ahead of the mess wagon.

"Well, I'll not hold you longer," Eager said, turning his horse. "Somebody there will take charge of—" and the cowboy nodded toward the bundle in the wagon.

"Thought I'd send word to Mr. Frye at Kanab and get his further instructions," Ames added, and Eager nodded approval as he was riding off.

The "Settlement" had reference to the outlying ranches mainly along the stream below Kanab. Just where the road from the mountain approached the little stream that meandered through the desert on its way from Kanab to the great gulch, a little oasis

showed between sand dunes to the west and the reddish brown and blue-gray badlands to the east. It was a mere cluster of ranches, considered by the people there to be the beginning of a village or town, and known to the cattlemen of the surrounding country as "Hardscrabble." Ames grimly wondered if the dead man in the wagon was the only thing that might be buried there. Veritably it did seem to him a fitting morgue for dead hopes.

He concluded finally that it was cruel for the girl not to talk if her mood was as blue as his own, and so he made her talk. It was of the mountain to the right, the great yawning gulch to the west, and farther on the sharp, snow-spotted outline of a high, jagged range of mountains glistening white in the late June sun. Heat waves quivered and danced along the crest of the distant sand dunes, and the open flats were dotted with grazing or dozing cattle, or here and there a dust streak showed where a scampering band of wild horses fled away from the sight of some horseman, real or fancied, who rode a part of the wide sweep of desert range. To the north it was the same picture the two had witnessed not many weeks ago, as they drove northward to the ferry from the Trading Post. There, comparatively in the foreground, was the red granite terrace, a sheer bold wall, hundreds of feet high, while farther back loomed the white sandstone face, splotched here and there with black lava-flows—as though a mighty Vulcan had patched the earth's cracked and gaping crust. Still farther back, and dimmed by distance, the pink cliffs that fringed the face of the southern rim of the Great Basin stood frowning over the whole vast stretch of matchless color marvel, the western portion of the Painted Desert.

At noon they reached a place where the meager travel of the time found rest and food for man and beast. A woman sent a small boy to bring her husband from the field. He came accompanied by another man,

who took charge of the corpse with the expressed opinion that, in the absence of any facilities for embalming, burial must not be later than the following day. The matronly woman of the crude hostelry sought the comfort of the sojourners; after the liberal meal Ames took occasion to tell her what he knew of the girl's condition, and bespoke her kindly offices, only to be good naturedly told that she had never seen the time when she needed either the advice or the aid of a cowpuncher to care for "a yoong leddy." To his surprise she led him through a little room, drew a curtain from across a door, and motioning silence, beckoned him to look. One impulse was not to do so, but another impulse moved him to it, and he didn't know whether he was glad or sorry that the good motherly soul was there,—right there, looking on. Neeva lay sleeping as sweetly as a child. Deftly placed cushions and pillows to relieve the weight—almost the very touch, of light covers, neck cleanly bandaged in some material, and wet gauzy cloth across the open window to cool the warm summer air. Ames could have hugged the dear old soul for what she had done for the girl and again for the sight she had permitted him.

"Your heart's in your eyes," the good soul said with a mischievous twinkle in her own, as she had led him away and closed the door.

Another man, with mud on his boots and carrying a shovel, now came to the house. He asked Ames a number of questions about Hudman and left with the statement that they would have a short service the next afternoon at the little school house,—which also did duty as a church. He asked for any suggestions Ames might have. Not knowing what Mr. Frye's desires might be, Ames sent the team with the supplies back to the herd by a young man who volunteered his services; then, procuring a fresh horse, he went on to Kanab to consult his employer. To his surprise Mr. Frye manifested little interest in the matter of Hud-

man's death, or the arrangements for burial, expressing the opinion that he would likely not attend the services and intimating that he preferred not to be known as having any interest in the matter. Accordingly, Ames returned late that night and placed the whole matter of the burial in the hands of the men who had taken charge upon his arrival at the settlement. He talked the matter over with Miss Price and they decided that propriety demanded that they attend the service. Truth to tell, they had a tinge of curiosity due to the simple solemnity, though not sadness, with which these frontier people went about the preparation for the burial of an absolute stranger. Both Ames and Miss Price had understood that the pioneers made little ceremony of such occasions.

Quite early in the day Eager came in to arrange for a pasture in which to hold the herd for a day of rest; and at noon the herd was in the pasture and all the boys but two came on to the settlement. Whether it was from a sense of obligation or merely in the spirit of the occasion engendered by the attitude of the people of the little settlement, virtually all of whom laid aside their work to do proper credit to the occasion, the cowboys tied their horses to the fences, trees, and hitching posts, and all went to the funeral of their comrade.

CHAPTER XXXII

"THIS IS NOT THE LAST"

THE addition of the eight or ten visitors to the usual number of the surrounding settlers filled the crude little school house to its capacity, some of the men even standing in the corners, others seated on the steps at the open door. Manifestly funerals, this funeral of a stranger cowboy at least, was an occasion. Ames and the girl looked for the minister but could discern no particular characteristics by which to distinguish him. The man who the previous evening had manifestly come from his field where he had left off the task of irrigation, as evidenced by the shovel he had carried and the muddy boots, seemed to be in charge of the proceedings. A few of the flowers of the season were in evidence on the home-made coffin, now covered with some pearl colored cloth material. It rested on an improvised small platform, back of which sat two or three men. The visitors sat forward at one side, and on the other was a cottage organ at which a young woman was seated. Between her and the improvised pulpit were two men and two women.

A young man back of the pulpit nodded to the organist who, amid the solemn hush, started to play a low, soft dirge. The four people stood up and sang:

"What voice salutes the startled ear,
  And wakes the stricken heart,
Yet seems to chide each childish fear,
  And hope again impart?
Is it an echo of the past,
  To which we silent cling?
'O grave, where is thy victory,
  'O death where is thy sting.'

Here, where the open bier sustains
The friend just passed away,
We know that glad relief obtains
From its encumbering clay!
While by the ready grave we stand
Exalting faith we bring—
'O grave, where is thy victory,
O death, where is thy sting.'"

To at least two of that little, solemn congregation there was a new note. Instead of the usual farewells, consoling though they usually are with their pledge of some vague hope, here was challenge; not brusque nor blunt as based upon one's known power but upon an assurance that seemed to rest on steadfast faith, aye, upon knowledge itself.

But of course these singers, these frontier folk, did not know this man's life. Hope? Hope, beyond the grave for such as he? Had he sought Christ or ever acquiesced in the faith or doctrines that Christ was divine? If not—of course it was only form; simply a disavowal of effort or intent to judge this rough, crude man who had never given thought since he had gone his own wild way, to what religion had to offer.

Another rose and offered prayer, the substance of which was that they who lived might learn from the hour and fact of death how serious was the fact of life; that while they knew not the character of this man's life they took hope in the fact of God's great love and mercy and wisdom, and the fact that before this life and its experiences that wisdom and that love had laid the plan whereby sweet Mercy sat at Justice's side to minister with strength of love while Justice took its own thence to send the purged and purified on toward the hope that Love sent shining 'cross the way.

What was that? One of the things that had always dampened Lew Ames' efforts, or his thoughts, in connection with religion was the incomprehensible conflict between God's justice and His alleged mercy. Ames had been told that God was just and also that those individuals who did not in their lives sooner or later

confess their belief in Christ were doomed, were entirely outside the pale of mercy. When he had pondered this he could recall individuals of his own acquaintance who possessed many, if not most, of those qualities that make the highest type of manhood and who, as he personally knew, were absolutely honest in their views and desires, but who had said they could not bring themselves to an acceptance of Christ's divinity in the light of orthodox interpretation. Were they irredeemable? On the other hand, he also knew individuals who through the whole course of their lives had been, wilfully it seemed, and recklessly wicked and who had deliberately put off the day of repentance upon the assurance that their final verbal assent to a belief in Christ cleansed them of all iniquity and placed them spotless and equal with the man who all his life had lived circumspectly, though at great effort. And here was an ordinary western rancher standing there and in the very form and words of prayer declaring with all the assurance of actual knowledge that Justice first took its own, then Mercy came to minister when Justice had been satisfied. It was a ray of hope; the promise or suggestion of a solution to the biggest religious problem of his life; so big and so perplexing that it always discomforted him to ponder it and made him afraid to pursue it deeply for fear that it might destroy such faith as he had wished to cling to. His faith—or was it just hope?—did not include that fundamental assurance which is said to be a chief element of faith. He had never gotten near enough to the matter to sense possession of that assurance but had in fact, many times mentally backed away from the problem because of the gnawing fear of not ultimately finding the answer he sought. Every such time had seemed to increase the feeling that it was only hope he had and that he was without faith at all. From his own mental status he could readily believe that faith might be a comforting thing, but why could it not be associated with reason? Why should it be

afraid of reason or reason of it? He hoped that there more might be said along this line.

The prayer was finished. It had breathed the same strong reposeful assurance as had the song, and now he of yesterday's muddy boots arose:

"My friends." He began in a matter-of-fact tone, and a manner that smacked not at all of sadness, although earnest and solemn. "There is something in the present occasion that leads me to philosophize on the great problem of life as it is most nearly brought to us in death. Before us lies a brother of whose life and character we know but very little. But let us, in the light of such inspiration as we may obtain, reason from the little we do know back along his life's course and see where we arrive.

"We know that he died suddenly, perhaps violently, but in the course of duty. Is there any reward for that? He died discharging his duty; possibly in an effort to assist or to save others; possibly to save only his horse, or himself. Without meaning to cast any reflections, but solely for the convenience of our reasoning, suppose that he was not a good man. Is there anyone so uncharitable as to say or think that he did no good? Suppose he did not like you or me. Yes, go on and suppose he sought to harm us or had actually harmed us. Back of that would be a cause, a motive, an excuse, a reason. What made that reason? or motive? or excuse? Or, perhaps we should say, what *was* it? Why, it was a state of mind. Very well. What made or caused that state of mind? Ideas, thoughts, previous experience, associations, environment, prenatal influence, heredity, bodily health, appetites perverted or otherwise. We know that any one of these, or all of them in combination, might go to make up a state of mind. Then I ask you to consider again this question in all of its ramifications: How far could this brother, or you, or I, be held responsible for all or any single one of these numerous agencies or influences? These ideas, thoughts, prenatal influ-

ences, bodily health, even our own peculiar appetites? To an extent we are responsible for most of these in varying degrees and for some of them to a great degree, but we are not absolutely responsible for many of them. Now, if they are the forces that determine our actions and we cannot control them entirely, then I ask you: upon these premises, how far are we responsible for our actions? I do not mean to eliminate, belittle, or in any way underrate individual responsibility. That remains, and, I grant—I insist—that we are responsible to a great degree for most of these elements or conditions, hence I ask you to keep in mind that individual responsibility does go on; but at the same time I do insist that it is not absolute and that it follows that man is not ultimately blameable for all of his actions. And then comes the question—who is to judge? Not I. Not you. Our part is to forgive. There is no alternative, for, saith the Lord—But, let me read it."

Ames glanced at Miss Price. She sat in rapt, almost strained attention. Ames thought that this was more like a class in advanced—very advanced—philosophy than a religious sermon. He was never more interested in a lecture or discourse in his life than in this funeral sermon over the remains of one of the crudest, coarsest men he had ever met. Where was it going to end? He glanced over the audience. All were tense with interest. He glanced at the speaker. The plain, matter-of-fact face was aglow with intelligence.

He turned a leaf or two in the book he had picked up.

"Yes," and he proceeded to read:

" 'Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another, for he that forgiveth not his brother standeth condemned before me. . . . I, the Lord will forgive whom I will forgive, but of you it is required to forgive all men; and ye ought to say in your hearts, let God judge between me and thee.'

"There we have it. Leave judgment to an Alwise God and be safe ourselves by forgiving all men. He

knoweth the hearts and the minds of men and can make allowance for that part for which the individual is not entirely responsible. We can't,—you and I. From our viewpoint sin is simply not doing a thing in the best way, and in that way we are all sinners. But God knows the exact point, in every instance, where individual responsibility begins and ends, and He will make no mistakes. Faith, on our part, is in conceding that there is such a point, and in striving to know where our individual responsibility begins or ends, to know where faith merges into repentence and further, that repentence is sticking to that point and pushing it ever and ever on toward clearer seeing, better understanding, greater knowledge. When we have moved that point to where we see, understand, and properly apply the truth in all instances it will be time for us to attempt to sit in judgment.

"But it is the fact of judgment—of exact and righteous judgment—that concerns us now. We will be judged by One who knows, who cares, who loves us all. Even by Him whose children we are.

"Now, then: What is He going to do with us all as a result of that judgment? I am not so good as you. You are not quite so good as another. Why? My dear friends, it's all a matter of the extent to which we each sought—mind you, *sought*—to know our duty and the extent to which we did it. Neither one alone would do. I might do my full duty but see to it that it were but a little duty. You might do your full duty and all the while keep making that duty grow larger and larger, taking on more and greater responsibility. Or, I might slight, neglect or ignore my duty to a certain extent, while you might slight your duty to a less degree. What about it? Shall you and I and all the better than, and the worse, turn our faces to heaven and say: 'Father, we believe,' and all of us get the same reward? If so, where is the consistency of that judgment? Is there no premium on effort? on accomplishment? Is judgment just a matter of getting into the

kingdom or of not getting in? No! A thousand times no! There will be judgment,—righteous judgment—exact justice. This existence is like a school—or, rather, it is a school. Those who learn, grow, acquire knowledge, power, intelligence, are simply acquiring in varying degrees the glory of God which is intelligence, and they get it by actual self effort. The fact that it is available is grace. Christ, by grace, brought the great medium of salvation, and we may reject it or not as we please. As a matter of fact we do reject it just in the proportion that we defer, lessen, or suspend effort. On the other hand we avail ourselves of grace just to the extent we work—make use of it, strive to overcome, subdue, rise above. Lucifer the 'Son of the Morning' would have deprived us of the opportunity—yes, the need, to work, and by his opposition was thrust out of heaven, landed here on the earth, and tried to frustrate the plan of salvation. But Christ came and brought us grace, which points out the way to combat opposition, surmount obstacles, and rise, rise, rise. The greatest joy of salvation will be that Christ showed the way, provided the means; and the next greatest joy will be that He so ordered it that we could work our way and have part—mind you, just part,—of the credit of our salvation.

"Now, we look over the earth and say the plan isn't working out. There's too big a proportion of sin and wrong and misery. Too big a proportion of failure,—to much waste of effort, of talent, of life. We may say people are not trying; that a great majority are going to hell. Will it shock you too much if I say 'Very well, let them go there!' What of that? Think you he that was 'cast out' has any place where grace can not go? Suppose I go to hell. Shall I always remain there? I will if Satan is the master of Christ and can keep me there. But that is not the case. Christ is Master and hath 'set up a Kingdom' and 'the gates of hell *cannot prevail against it.*' Let me go to hell, then, and stay there until I learn it is not a good

place to be. Then what? Is Christ a respector of prisons? David said, 'Thou wilt not leave *my* soul in hell.' Notice the words: 'Will not leave *my* soul in hell.' But when shall I come out? What were the Master's words? 'Until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.' We begin now to understand the Prophet Job when he said: 'Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom'; and the Psalmist who sang: 'He brought me up out of an horrible pit.' The Apostle Paul seemed to hold out hope after death when he wrote to the Corinthians, saying: 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most miserable.' Why? Because so many of us fall so short of the attainment in this life of all that grace holds out that we need more time. Even the best will need more time. And those who did not look the way of grace in life will see its advantages and go and start at the destined place.

"But one may ask 'Is there grace in hell?' I answer, 'Christ is Master and the gates of hell cannot prevail againt him.' 'Even so,' you may say, 'He may not want to go there.' Very well, let us see.

"When he ministered upon the earth and had been crucified he was placed in the tomb. On that same day, a few hours before, he had said to a penitent thief, 'Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.' Three days later when Mary saluted him at the door of the sepulchre he said: 'I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God.' But he had kept his promise with the penitent thief and had been in paradise for some surpose. What purpose was that? The nearest to an explanation I can find is in the words of the Apostle Peter when he spake of Christ's being 'put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit: by which he went and preached unto the spirits in prison,' and it is significant to notice that the Apostle specifies that those preached to were the disobedient ones to whom

Noah had preached in the days of the Ark's preparation.

"In proof that the proud, the haughty, who on earth were careless of the grace by which salvation comes and had to pay the penalty, but who thereafter were to have a chance at the truth, do not lose sight of the significant words of Isaiah when he said: 'And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.' That same prophet in his foreknowledge of the Redeemer's mission declares it to be, among other things, 'To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.'

"But you may say I have overlooked the doctrine of everlasting punishment! Not at all. Everlasting punishment—certainly. If it were not so where would Justice find the means of punishing those who deserve punishment? As long as God exists Justice will exist, and as long as Justice abides it must sit enthroned with rewards on the one hand and punishments on the other; else the judgment were of no avail. 'But, what of the eternal damnation?' one may ask. Note again the Master's words: 'He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved but he that believeth not shall be damned.' There's the key. He is *damned* so long as he *does not believe,* and every one of us is damned—eternally damned—to the extent that we delay acceptance of grace when it is offered us. Suppose grace comes to you and to me today—now, and you pray and seek and serve, while I play, procrastinate, neglect. What is the consequence? Why, you go on toward perfection. Then suppose that tomorrow or next week or next year I accept and do as you have done. Are we equal? By no means. You are ahead, I am behind, and just in that proportion I am eternally damned. But I did it myself. 'Ah,' says one, 'Christ is no respecter of persons and if you comply with the terms are your opportunities less, your blessings and rewards

less than the first?' To that I would answer no, they are not *at any given point in the great path of progress.* He evolves to a point and is rewarded accordingly. I evolve to that point later and get exactly the same reward, and so on, but would it not be an impeachment of Christ's justice for Him to hold you back, rob you of opportunity, because I procrastinated or dallied when you were striving on? But He will not do that. Justice would not tolerate it nor Mercy demand it. I must simply take my meed of self-imposed damnation and live with it, it being as eternal as I,—and the absolutely consummate wisdom of the scheme lies in the fact that the justice of the judgment is registered in my own mind, there to be found to accuse me but yet to teach me. Some few evidently there will be who, like Lucifer, after having been shown the wisdom, the justice, and the mercy of this plan of grace, and having partaken of its spirit and its fruits, will still reject and oppose it. 'They are they who deny the Son after the Father hath revealed him.' From these grace may be shut away because in them is no wish or thought of repentance, or of progress, nor ever will be.

"Everlasting punishment? Eternal damnation? Yes, to be sure, but in and through and over it all justice, mercy, love—the elements of all truth.

"So, my friends, I am glad that the grace of Christ, manifest in His great Plan of Salvation, puts a premium on present effort, will reward all achievement, insure absolute justice, and permit no waste of good, and, after giving all bad its meed of punishment, will then permit, ay, provide the way, whereby the chastened may take up the way of truth and right and go on, and on, and ever on to more perfect knowledge, to greater good. I am glad that in the grace of God I see no end of progress, no bound to hope. Life simply merging into eternity, each and every day. Yesterday Eternity, today Life, tomorrow again Eternity, and always 'life everlasting' and the goodness and the wisdom of God over all. Faith, Hope, and

Charity ministering ever and always; and they, with stern Justice and sweet Mercy, merging all into the one, great, all-comprehending, boundless Truth. An eternal, limitless path of progression made possible by God's wisdom in which, through the mission of His Son, He proved,—actually demonstrated,—the literalness of the resurrection, the endlessness of life, and of His mighty purpose.

"In that knowledge, that faith, that hope, according to our understanding or the degree of comprehension we may have reached, we lay this, our brother, in the bosom of Mother Earth. It is not so material to us what his life may have been. It is what his life may yet be; for, verily, this is not the last!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

"BONES—DRY, MEATLESS BONES"

AT the conclusion of the services someone suggested that the cowboys be allowed to act as pall-bearers. Six of them picked up the coffin and bore it gently to a waiting spring wagon doing service as hearse, then, mounting their horses, they rode to the cemetary. From their manner it was clear that they had been deeply impressed, both with the fact of the importance of their dead comrade's life in the great scheme of God's economy and with this clear exposition of their own personal responsibility.

From the cemetary they rode to the mess wagon at the edge of town, and later some of them to the herd and others on up country to Kanab, but there was no raillery and not much conversation.

Both Ames and Geneva Price were so profoundly impressed that they could scarcely find either inclination or topic for conversation. At the place where they stayed each had expected to ask some questions but somehow neither could frame a question that seemed to suit the idea. At last when they were seated alone on a little shaded porch at one side of the house the girl broke silence.

"After all," she said, "life is not the whole thing."

She stopped, confused, and there was appeal in look and tone. She had spoken solely from the desire to start conversation and had chosen badly; spoken as though she had previously been of the opinion that life *was* the whole thing.

Ames would have spoken but concluded to let her complete what she had said.

"Now, didn't that sound heathenish?" she added, blushing prettily. "But don't you know," she went on after another pause, "that—discourse—it didn't seem like a sermon to me, and I suppose I ought not to call

it a lecture under the circumstances—but, anyhow, it has left me with a queer feeling. I—suppose I had looked upon religion as something not necessary to understand; something that it would be well to have about you somewhere, a—sort of first aid kit just to run to when you were injured or—scared, perhaps, and mine hasn't been used for so long that I'm not sure where I last placed it—and—if I found it again I'm afraid I would feel sort of foolish or chagrined about it because of the silly things it contained—things that wouldn't have served at all in an emergency."

She paused again and sat looking off to the north where the mountain formation showed terrace on terrace. Ames wanted to tell her that she was speaking his feelings exactly, only doing it better than he could. Her simile was so much better than any he could have used. She was thinking that religiously she was way down *there*—in the bottom of some deep dark canyon. Finally she spoke again.

"It isn't a nice thing to be ashamed of one's religion," she said, just a twinkle in her eyes now, "but before I bring mine out in public I'm going to take it off somewhere by myself and dust it off and look it over carefully for moths—or—weevils—or rust. Come to think about it, I am almost afraid they have nearly destroyed it. Maybe there's only a shell left."

She had started speaking as though to Ames but now was almost talking to herself, or just thinking aloud.

"—And a religion that is only a shell is—hypocrisy—mockery, to say the very least."

Then she turned to Ames, partly in the way of apology and partly to check her conclusion.

"Don't you think so?" she said.

"Don't you think—" he began, and then hesitated. He was anxious to frame the question so it would not seem to accuse her because of her candid confession. He decided, therefore, to start over.

"So far as I am concerned," he said, moving to the

subject cautiously, "I am afraid I have considered religion as some portion—perhaps a small portion—of life, whereas it *is* life. We've had some idea that religion was something we might accept or let alone, and that we might profess conditionally—without taking on too much of it; not enough to interfere with our personal plans or pleasures or business. It would seem, though, that if we admit there is anything at all in religion we must admit that it is of God; that He has had some definite aim or purpose in it—" He hesitated. "Now—I find I was laying my premise from the old view point, the assumption that religion is some part of the scheme of life, instead of all of it—so I must start over.

"If God has anything to do with life, He has to do with all of it—every whit. There would seem no alternative. We must either assume God, and act consistently with that thought, or we must dispense with the God idea and base our philosophy of life upon something else."

The girl caught her breath and looked up startled.

"Upon—what—?"

"Yes, that's just it—What?"

They sat and looked at each other, each seeming to expect or hope the other would suggest *that something else,*—that alternative,—or make the absolute admission that there was no alternative. Neither volunteered, so the girl took up the subject from another aspect.

"Are we short of a comprehension of what our ministers have been telling or trying to tell us,—or—have they—?"

She had started quite animatedly but seemed to be getting timid about the conclusion at which she had aimed. After the hesitation she seemed to decide to go on, and, having so decided, fairly dashed at the conclusion as though anxious to get it over.

"or—have they been a little short-sighted?"

She sprang up. The speaker at the funeral service

was coming along the path by the fence, once more ensconced in the muddy boots and with his shovel on his shoulder.

"I'm going to ask *him?*" she said, starting toward the fence. His head was turned and he did not see her approaching. It looked as though he was going to pass and they had not been introduced.

"Oh, Mister—" She came nearly adding "Philosopher." He turned and smiled.

"I beg your pardon," he said pleasantly. "Did you mean me?"

"Yes, sir, if you please. I—" then it occurred to her that she didn't know just what it was she wanted to ask him. "I just wanted to tell you that I thank you very much for the splendid discourse,—and also to ask you a question, because you left me a little—quite a bit—perplexed."

The man's smile faded as he let his shovel down on the ground and leaned on it.

"I'm very sorry," he said, "I wanted to make it clear, and if—"

"Oh, you did that," she admitted. "What you said was clear enough, but it's what you didn't say I'm going to ask about. It is this: You made it so much bigger and broader than—than I ever heard hinted at before, and I just wondered if we—if I had been utterly unable to grasp what our ministers have said and written, or if—they had been—what shall I say?—a little limited in vision themselves?"

His eyes twinkled again with their deep, quiet smile.

"Aren't you just a little severe? Asking me to pass judgment on others?"

It wasn't nearly so bad as the words alone would make it appear, with the twinkling, kindly eyes. She recalled that in no sense whatever, not even by inference or implication, had he been critical of others, and that, moreover, he had specifically disavowed the right to judge his fellowmen.

"Perhaps I could put it some other way?" she

admitted. "Well, I mean—no one, not even a pastor or priest, has ever told it that way before. I wonder why?"

She smiled now, flattering herself that she had put it fairly cleverly. But it looked as though his mind was entirely off the subject. He was looking at a dog just passing with a bone in its mouth. The dog crawled under the fence, went back in the lot some distance and crouched down on the ground, looked back over his shoulder, and then began gnawing the bone. The man's eyes followed every move so intently that it seemed to force the girl's eyes to do likewise.

"Now, just look at that! He's picked up that bone and gone off by himself. It isn't a meaty bone at all. Just enough to give it a faint flavor—a suggestion of what meat really is, but you know, it would be difficult to call him away from it. He'd fight for it now. It will tickle his imagination, if not his palate, and he'll stay there even when his supper is put out for him. If another dog should go over there, there'd be a fight —a fight over that bone, and not even the beginning of a meal. If someone should go there with a good piece of steak after the fight started they wouldn't stop—then. They'd go right on fighting for a little old piece of bone. I believe they'd trample on good food if it was put there. He went on after a pause:

"Funny, isn't it, how they get taken up with bones? —just dry, meatless bones?"

The girl turned when he reached the question. The man looked at her, smiling only with his eyes as he shouldered his shovel.

"Oh," she said, "Yes. Thank you," and turned and walked blushing back to Ames while the man went smiling to his work.

"Well, did he satisfy you?" Ames asked, curious as to both the information acquired and the cause of the blush.

"Perfectly," she said, blushing a little more.

"And are you going to leave me in outer darkness?"

he smiled. "Remember it is doing good that counts, sharing with others, 'doing good unto others,' to the heathen—and—all that, you know."

" 'Heathen' is right," she said, and then blushed more than ever.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said earnestly, yet with a smile, "I mean that *I* am a heathen. We're—I'm in the Sunday School Kindergarten—really *I* am," and she was quite emphatic in the declaration, "so he told me a dog story; about fighting over dry bones and trampling on good food—and—not coming home to supper—"

"What's that?" said the good lady of the house, as she stepped to the door. "Not coming home to supper? And I was just coming to tell you it was ready," and she turned laughing into the house.

"Yes," said the girl, rather solemnly, "I remember now; there was a supper prepared a long, long time ago, but the invited guests were busy and—did not come."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE POISON IN THE CUP

THE herd was moving very early next morning and, for some motive known only to herself, Neva stayed with the good matronly woman; sending word that if her uncle desired her to come to Kanab she would do so later. When she gave this decision to Ames, he hoped that it meant a return to the Ranch headquarters. He did not want to leave without better assurance, although he desired to get the information as indirectly as possible.

"I think you're wise," he said with an effort at just the right degree of concern. "You need a rest and, no doubt, this good woman will see that you get it. I hope you'll stay right here until—you—have to go on; or is it your intention to return to the ranch?"

Well, he had said it, and now was almost sorry he had put the question for fear he had brought the climax. Not that he would hesitate a moment to press his case and obtain a decision as to his status if there were only himself and the girl to consider. He felt the inevitableness of a clash with her uncle, sooner or later, and he did not know just how it might effect his plans and his resolution.

She looked at him so long that he began to think she was not going to answer.

"Oh, I must return to the ranch," she said at last, looking away as she spoke. "There is nothing to go home for, and—I must stay on the job with Elmer."

She seemed now to have gone off into a sort of reverie, almost as though speaking to herself.

"Uncle is generous and kind to me—but—Elmer—just gets on his nerves. He—the boy is our sole male hope, uncle not being married, and—he—just *must be a man.*"

While it is true that the girl spoke to cover another sentiment, nevertheless she spoke her true feelings and resolution with reference to her brother. A resolution, however, that, while it may have had existence in a vague way before, had found in acquaintance with Lewis Ames the stimulus to action and fixity of purpose. As a matter of fact Geneva Price had not been strongly impressed with her uncle's statements about Ames. The recital by his uncle of the incident when Ames had stopped the Mexican from abusing the horse had, however, deeply interested and impressed the boy. Out of that interest had come inspiration to bring him into this new environment in the hope that he might get further inspiration and some experience that would give him the incentive to action and the opportunity to serve. His sister knew that his uncle's patience and interest could not survive the ordeal of the boy's presence and conduct unaided, and knew also that there was the possibility of too low ideals being established in the new environment. So, out of sisterly regard she had determined to come west and make whatever personal sacrifices might be necessary.

With this understanding of her mission it will not be difficult to understand the deep interest with which, on the morning of her first meeting with Ames, she caught his suggestion to the boy about it's being "how one gives or takes the last blow that counts." It seemed to her the key note of man-building and hence attracted her attention to the speaker. It smacked of education,—of the philosophical,—and yet was typically western, the very epitome of western manhood's rugged creed. In the girl's mind Lewis Ames, as she observed that his whole philosophy of life or motive of action seemed founded upon that idea, was the very eponym of the creed. Looking for an ideal for a brother, and finding it, might be recommended to other or to all young ladies as the means of a safe compromise with Dan Cupid whereby reason and judg-

ment and candid observation might aid in determining the time and the direction of his shafts. Otherwise, who does not know, or eventually learn, that Dan is a very reckless bowman, and very blind withal.

It will be seen that it was not without reason that Geneva Price put forth the interests and welfare of her brother as the chief factor in determining her course of action. It had led her to her ideal; and while being true to that ideal, she was not false to her undenied albeit unproclaimed love.

Of course Ames saw no relationship between interest in a brother and in himself, and hence missed all the comfort which that knowledge might have bestowed. It was a comfort, however, to know that she was not now going unconcernedly out of his life and thereby threatening a direct issue between love and duty.

"I am very glad that there is prospect of seeing you again," he said, rather expecting the statement to startle her out of her reverie. Considering all that he felt and all that he wanted to say his statement seemed vapid and dull, even to the verge—so he thought—of actual stupidity. And, just here, might one not suggest to comfort those disposed to measure love's largeness by the fervor or eloquence of its expression, that Cupid's function never has been to talk much and that he shoots neither *with* nor *at* the tongue. Geneva Price had stored this bit of philosophy away in the ready recesses of her intellect and, while the man was disgusted with both his speech and manner, the philosophic girl, though not fully admitting so much to herself, read aright and took a crumb of comfort—a big crumb, almost a slice—from the loaf the man intended to offer.

"Goodbye," he said with a rather sickly smile—because he wanted to smile and didn't feel a bit like it.

"Goodbye," she said calmly, giving him her hand, rather wanting to smile but feeling that it might be best not to do so, and adding—"or, just au revoir—perhaps."

"Why did she spoil it with that 'perhaps'?" Ames thought as he mounted and rode away.

Mr. Frye came the following morning, and Geneva, her brother, and the cook returned with him to the ranch. It soon became plain to the girl that her uncle was much interested in her relationship with Ames, and was somewhat disturbed to find out that things had not progressed to the point of some more definite understanding between them. It troubled her to know that he was in any way concerned in the matter, for she was familiar enough now with the difference in character of the two men to know quite certainly that if, or when, their interests clashed there would most certainly be a commotion of some sort. She was also quite certain that there was virtually no probability of their getting along together for any considerable period. Candidly, she knew her uncle to be narrow as to view and selfish as to purpose, notwithstanding his efforts to justify his plans and accomplishments on the basis of a self-asserted altruism, for every argument or explanation came from him a palpable effort to disguise or minimize his own avarice, and his philosophy seemed to be that any sort of success justified the means.

On the other hand, Ames had struck her from the very first as utterly unselfish; as a man the motive of whose efforts originated outside of self-interest, and whose ideals were so high that their altruism, yes, and often their cosmicism, was manifest in expression and conduct. Not that he deferred in judgment or waited upon the conclusions of others, but that in forming his own characteristically independent opinion, or in reasoning to conclusions, the element of self was not considered beyond the guarding of his honor. It was plain, therefore, to this direct, clear-thinking girl that any point of common interest of these two men was very likely—in fact, almost absolutely sure—to be an uncomfortable one for all concerned. While as a matter of fact she had little in the way of manner, and

nothing in the way of statement, upon which to base a conclusion that Lewis Ames was more than casually interested in her, she nevertheless sensed a growing feeling of uneasiness, a feeling that became so pronounced on one occasion as almost to lead to a conclusion to go home. That she did not reach such a conclusion and promptly act upon it, was due partly to her own tenacity of purpose, and partly to the sound matter-of-fact reasoning she brought to bear. In the first place, she would admit to herself frankly, there was nothing in Ames' conduct, manner, or expression to justify the assumption that his interest in her was, or ever might become, such as to clash in any way with her uncle's plans. At the very best, it was assumption, and one, too, that was more a matter of her own desire than of actuality. She could plainly see this when she put heart out of the argument and looked bare facts straight in the face. Then—and here was a bigger consideration, born of her own strength and independence and matured by the example and sentiments of Ames himself—if she ran away from the situation she would be doing just what she was positive her ideal would not do: duck, dodge, hesitate, or back away from the pinch of duty for any personal consideration. *He* would not do that; *she knew he would not.* Furthermore, if there were no clash of interest what was there to run from or worry about? and if there were a clash, would she run away? If so, to what? She had the courage, this woman girl, to face every phase of the situation that she could possibly conceive, to reason about it, and decide.

There was the obligation to her uncle—a great obligation, she admitted unhesitatingly. He had virtually kept her, her mother, and brother, when death had robbed them of husband and father. But could any mess of pottage however large or however graciously given, justify turning one's back upon duty? If so, at what point? *At what point* should duty yield to self-interest? Did she hesitate? Only just long enough

to cast the idea in the mould of expression: "Place self first and duty last when the *God of Love abdicates the Throne of Grace and hands the Crown of Glory to Mammon.*" Mammon, of course, has his kingdom and his laws and his followers and a power so potent that he got at least one member of earth's first family, and more than his share ever since. So potent was it that the "Son of Man," before entering upon his earthly mission, first settled the controversy with Satan "in the wilderness"—there to give proof that no personal interest, no pride nor power, no adulation nor plaudits of the world, was the full price of duty abandoned or of right denied.

And so, having the double motive for staying,— her heart said her *love* and her head said her *duty*,—she had decided to stay.

Her suspense, however, was not to last long. Soon there came a day when the men were all away from the ranch, except her uncle and the cook, whose place with the herd had been taken by a man engaged for the remainder of the trip. She was preparing for a ride with Elmer down to the rimrock when her uncle stopped her as she ran into the house to get something they needed for lunch.

"Going away, Neeva?" Mr. Frye asked in a voice meant to be matter-of-fact, but which was too obviously so.

"Yes," she said, trying to make it seem so absolutely settled that he would not gainsay it. "My time's getting short here and I'm going to make the best of it. I want to get Elmer so well broken in and hardened that he can be of some use another season. Today we—"

"Call it off for today," said Mr. Frye in a voice that seemed to combine a plea and a command. "I have been wanting to have a talk with you for some time. Suppose you let Sam take your horse and take a ride with Elmer and we'll have no one to interrupt us,

because what I have to say concerns you—concerns both of us, very much—or may."

His requests were so few and his favors so many that she knew she could have absolutely no excuse for not doing as her uncle requested.

"All right, Uncle," she said quite cordially. "Shall I tell them, or will you?"

"You tell Elmer and I'll see the cook," he suggested, with the result that in a very few minutes the man and boy were cantering off down the valley road.

As Mr. Frye and the girl faced each other in the little room, the girl felt instinctively that something crucial was coming. She would not have been able to state a reason for that feeling, but it was there just the same.

"Neeva," said her uncle, with an effort at an odd mixture of impressiveness and levity, which, because of that odd mixture, resulted in something very like a smirk, "how have you and Mr. Ames gotten along?"

The girl's heart sank perceptibly, but her quick intellect promptly suggested levity as the safest basis on which to meet and parry her uncle's probes.

"Oh, quite famously," she smiled.

"Did he—did—he seem—" clearly Mr. Frye knew he was in a delicate if not embarrassing position, asking leave to enter the sacred precincts of a girl's undeclared affections, but, limited as his own experience had been, he knew that the beginning of love was a prochronism in most cases—a fact existent always before, in some cases *long* before—its literal admission even to self. The thought that gave him pause was the probability that to assume too much would beget only a flat denial, while if he took the right measure even approximately at the first hazard, he could count on the girl's innate candor to admit, at least not to deny, the facts. After the hesitancy, therefore, he recast the question without changing the first words.

"Did he take good care of you?"

"As much as there was any occasion for either

advice or service," she answered, with all the mischievousness she could put into the words and look. Thereby she over-played her hand to the extent that her uncle perceived her defense and proceeded to batter it down.

"I appreciate, Neeva, that I am a little blunt in this matter," he said with some sternness, "but do not lose sight of the fact that I have your interest at heart—a fact of which I hope I have given some proof."

The girl wondered if she had possibly misjudged or misunderstood her uncle. She did not want to be unjust nor did she intend to be taken off her guard, so she simply looked her perplexity and waited for her uncle to proceed.

If Jacob Frye had a trait more dominant in his nature than another, or than all others, it was directness, and, in justice to him let it be said here and now that to that lack of a finely turned intellectual rudder by which to steer his mental processes approximately along—note the qualifying word, *approximately* along—the straight and narrow path of consistency or integrity, was to be attributed the main difference between him and some others. There was no attempt at finesse on his part. He could not mentally meander. When he was right he was very glad, but, when in the vigorous pursuit of his own ends his unbending determination jounced him off the straight and narrow way he wasted no time with fine spun intellectual paliatives, but went his chosen way in the vigorous, albeit sophistical, opinion that the end justified the means, and that sometime he would turn the deed or the purpose to so much good as to prove it. True, he would sometimes argue the consistency of his course, or declare a chimeric motive, but never with a view to self-deception; that was just a sophistical bone for the other fellow to gnaw on to keep him busy and out of the way of progress—a bit of philosophy generally much better understood by politicians than by the proletariat.

With so much by way of explanation of Jacob Frye's makeup, we can understand his methods even while we may feel justified in turning over or inside-out, his declaration of motive. On this occasion he had no notion of doing the girl any final harm. He honestly thought he would accomplish a good purpose ultimately,—hence why quibble as to the immediate motive? Ah! there is the sophistical snag,—the failure to note that sin sets no guide signs pointing the way back to the path of right or good; that all the by-ways between the courses of the right and wrong converge on the latter at a very acute angle so that there can be no gradual turning from wrong to right. The course of the change is invariably backward, and that, too, against the ever-pressing surge of the many others who travel the same broad way. Jacob Frye had not traveled the course to the point where he had learned the lesson to this extent, for it is only adversity and suffering that first brings realization that somewhere along the broad way sits Retribution and that Retribution is, after all, a reformer, though stationed beyond the reach of kind Mercy where stern Justice stands across the path and pays and takes until penalties are paid—exact and full.

While, therefore, Mr. Frye's scruples, or lack of them, did not always lead him along the track of circumspection, in the pursuit of his own purposes he always "intended" that the success of that purpose would vindicate the method of its attainment, and if the philosophy was against him, was he to blame? Let whoever is without the same sin cast the the first stone.

It would be too much to say that Mr. Frye was not concerned about the wedded happiness of his niece, but neither would it be beyond the facts to say that in his direct, aggressive, unsentimental mind he saw opportunity in the possibility of her alliance with Lewis Ames, provided it was accomplished with a definite

understanding which it was his present purpose to bring about.

Geneva Price feared this very motive in her uncle's question and look, and tried hard to rally her wits to meet the dread purpose, without denial of appreciation of her obligations, without disavowal of any fact, and at the same time without duplicity.

"Uncle Jay," she said finally, "I am appreciative of your kindness to me as manifest in all you have done for me—for all of us. I am also aware that I have very likely come short of proper manifestation of that appreciation, and am, therefore, subject to some chiding—and—"

She was speaking very slowly in the hope that he would say something more—enough to give her a cue as to just how far she must go in order to defend herself against any cold-blooded and unscrupulous plan of his, built upon the assumption of her love for Lewis Ames. But he did not break in, so, groping at first, then firmly gathering herself, she forced a smile and went on.

"—and if it were any sort of reparation, I'd willingly take a little scolding."

She hadn't yet said anything justifying a reply from him, but she ended the statement with a sort of finality that made it clear she intended it to be his next move.

"You didn't understand me at all, Neeva," he said in a voice and manner that left her puzzled as to whether there was a note of pain in the unfeigned sternness. "I'd like to know right here, and now: Would you marry a man who was the enemy of your Uncle Jay? One who had come here deliberately to oppose me and break me down and rob me and get me into serious trouble? Would you, Neeva?"

There was no mistaking it this time. The note of pain was there. But did it ring true? If it was sincere it would make quite a difference in her answer. Somehow the girl could think accurately, clearly. If it were the plea of one who, sensing his wrong position,

now recognized himself pitted against a foe that virtually insured defeat, she would be as merciful as her sense of right would permit. If it were dissimulation merely for the sake of effect she would stand her ground, and—well, she would not let herself be sacrificed on the altar of Mammon,—or, if she were to be made the sacrifice, she would at least not stultify her honor by any sort of barter of her affections.

"Uncle Jay," she said, in a tone and with a look that made her uncle aware that he was dealing with a woman of purpose, "it is just possible that you will never know how really, truly grateful I am for all you have done for me—for all of us,—because I am afraid that in some things I may not be able to please you. I say that deliberately, merely as a safeguard in case you do find that I am unable to please you entirely, and because I fear that love may not be a matter that takes into consideration the aims and purposes of others. Answering your question more directly, I will say that there seems to me no occasion for your question as far as I can see."

"You have not answered at all, so far, Neeva."

"Then, I say to you frankly, Uncle, that I do not think it fair to ask me an entirely hypothetical question, and expect me to make a literal answer amounting—or that may amount to—a literal pledge."

"If my question is hypothetical, I'll put it in a different form, and preface it with a statement. Mr. Ames is manifestly playing to win your—well, I'll speak plainly,—he wants to win you, whether he wants your love or not, and—"

"Uncle!" The girl broke in with a look and tone that proved somewhat disconcerting to Mr. Frye. "Why do you say that? Why do you say Mr. Ames wants to win me and while saying it imply that it is for some ulterior motive that makes my—well, that makes me a mere pawn in some sort of game?"

It was clear that her direct questions were somewhat disconcerting to Mr. Frye. It was no part of his plan

to state what he knew, and the girl had turned the table and put him on the defensive. He was not sure how to proceed.

"I'll ask you to answer the first part of my question only," she said in the honest effort to give him a fair chance, "and leave the other until later. Upon what do you base the statement that Mr. Ames wants to win me? If you tell me that, it may help me to answer you fully and completely."

Mr. Frye was not sure now that he wanted a full and complete answer, because it might not serve the purpose he had intended. He had only meant to make the fact of Lewis Ames' regard for his niece or her's for Ames, a matter of advantage to himself if that were possible—and he had gone so far as to assume that it would be. In case he could not use it to his advantage he had not decided upon any course, except that in a vague way he had felt that he would oppose their union, or any sentiment making it likely, unless certain it would be advantageous to him. Now had come the fear that matters might have reached, or might in the near future reach, a stage so far advanced as to rob him of the opportunity he had sought.

He was afraid his suspicions were confirmed and he had delayed too long in seizing his advantage. He had not decided as to his course in case Ames succeeded in winning the girl, and also was found to be opposed to his plans and policy. If Ames was opposed to his plans and did not win the girl he had known all along what he would do. Simply get rid of the man by refusing him employment. But the better he knew the man, the more he wanted to consider the affirmative phase of the case, and the more he had built his plans upon the assumption that Ames and his niece would mate and that by manoeuvering just right at the psychological moment he could commit one or both of them in such a way as to remove the possibility of harm to his business plans. Now it began to look as though he had waited too long, or at least

that if he pressed for a decision from the girl it might not be at all to his liking. Not as a result of any conclusion but because he was afraid of any conclusion, and out of the perplexity due to the discovery that he had counted in his hand as trump a card that turned out to be the wrong suit, Frye considered it to be a matter of discretion, if not of valor, to "back up" as gracefully as possible.

"Well, girlie," he said, forcing a smile, "you want to question me, I see, instead of answering my questions, and you even want me to prove that he loves you, or that he doesn't, so I guess I'll have to beg off. I can't do either. But,—" and he tried to be impressive here, "I'll not deny, Neeva, that I was partly in earnest in bringing up this subject, so that you would appreciate that there are quite a number of things to be considered by a girl before she takes the step that must very largely influence her life's future state."

He flattered himself that he had backed out of his predicament with some grace and cleverness, but he had not included all the factors in reaching his conclusion. The girl was not yet through.

"But, Uncle Jay," she said with some decision, "you said Mr. Ames wanted to win me, and implied that it was for an ulterior motive; that—well, that he perhaps would not—want me for myself but for some selfish reason. Did you mean that, and if you do how am I to protect myself unless I know what that selfish reason may be?"

Mr. Frye smiled, intending to josh the girl into the belief that he had meant nothing, but it suddenly occurred to him that here was opportunity, by the adroit use of innuendo, to put in the wedge that might after all make him master of the situation.

"Well," he said, feigning reluctance to pursue the matter, "the situation is this: I bought this property here, this range and cattle, in a perfectly legitimate way from the company that had previously owned it. They had gotten into financial difficulty through the

rash speculation of one of the officials and because they tried to run it as a sort of charitable institution, letting every Tom, Dick and Harry run their cattle on the range—and all that. The people who had been using the range wouldn't or *didn't* buy it, but I *did,* and, having bought and paid for it, I wanted to run the ranch in a businesslike way, to do which I had to claim what I bought. They didn't like that, and are working all sorts of schemes to get me into trouble. This man, Ames, came here under very suspicious circumstances. So you can see that if he is here as part of a deliberate scheme to get control again, and he could get you, he would have accomplished exactly that,—wouldn't he?"

He finished with a smile because he did not want to leave the girl with too definite an impression that he spoke his real feelings; but he did want to leave some vague though lasting impression to build upon later if opportunity afforded.

It was evident the girl did not see wherein winning her necessarily could be any part of the scheme to injure her uncle's business. She sat in puzzled contemplation of his statement, particularly of the question with which he had finished.

"I—really, Uncle Jay," she said in all sincerity, "I do not see—?"

"Oh, you don't, eh?" and he grinned mischievously to hide the vexation he felt that she should make him pursue the matter further. "Well, I'm a bachelor with not a living brother or sister but with an attractive niece as my nearest relative, and, with the exception of her namby-pamby brother, my sole heir-in-law. I own more than seventy per cent of the stock in this concern, and—"

"Uncle!"

The girl's exclamation startled him, for in it was a ring of rebuke as well as astonishment that puzzled the cold, calculating, unsentimental Jacob Frye. His

consternation showed in both facial expression and attitude; but he did not speak, so the girl went on:

"Do you think I'd be caught like that? Do you think women are so blind that they can not tell when they are sought as a mere means to a—a—mercenary, solely mercenary end?"

The man saw that he had hit harder than he had intended, but concluded that it was just as well. Plainly the girl was shocked—hurt, in fact,—at his insinuation, but her unemotional, utilitarian uncle thought he could make that right later.

"Others have been caught just like that, is all I can say, and I assume that what has been is again possible. But I do not assume that you would allow this—allow such a thing to occur knowingly. All I say is simply that people, perhaps as high-minded as you, have been deceived; deceived into thinking that a certain motive prompted someone's conduct when in fact it was another and very different one. But," and he assumed an air of sudden recollection, "I must go at once. I'd entirely forgotten that I noticed a break in the pasture fence last night, and intended to send someone to repair it. Now I must go and see to it myself."

This sudden recollection on the part of Jacob Frye was specious, and framed with deliberate intent to leave the girl in a state of perplexity—in fact, a state of distrust. He hoped to perpetuate it, or terminate it later, as best suited his purpose, knowing full well that innuendo, rightly used, is an effective poison, and in this particular case would prevent the young lady from sipping her cup of bliss too copiously until he had time to take further measure of Ames.

CHAPTER XXXV

"ALFALFA AN' 'THE WOOLIES'—'SCUSE ME!"

PASSING through Kanab on the return trip, and after receiving a message from some source, Eager directed Ames to take charge of the team, remain two or three days in town, and then load provisions for the ranch. The rest of the men went on, with the exception of Lippy, who had not been with the herd since it passed through Kanab. Both Hudman and Blackie had called the foreman's attention to characteristic statements of Lippy's, one of which had led to his sudden resignation in a way and for a reason quite characteristic of him. It seems that unexpectedly to the other men with the herd, Blackie had come to Kanab and met Mr. Frye there, and Lippy, happening to be in town to make a few purchases, saw Behannan ride in immediately behind a party of excursionists who had been on the mountain for a little outing. When Lippy noticed this he was standing in front of a store tying a bundle on his saddle, and did not observe Mr. Frye come around the corner of a building and stop within ten feet of him as he, too, spied Blackie riding along the street.

Some bystander expressed wonder as to whom "the Dago" might be, to which another opined that he was likely a sheep-herder or a range scout for some sheep outfit. Both of these terms are derisively used by cattlemen.

Lippy, who was never known to miss the opportunity to state an opinion, much less fail to impart information, had heard the conversation of the bystanders. Blackie had passed without the slightest sign of recognition of his employer, who also had stood looking at him with an air of casual curiosity.

"Sheepherder nothin'!" said Lippy with the air of one who "had the dope." "That's my old side-kick,

Blackie Behannan, Lord High Executioner for the Honorable Mr. Jake Frye, King of Kaibab and Emperor of All-Out-Doors. In other words, the measly skunk whose odoriferous business it is to stink people off the range claimed by the—"

Turning as he spoke, Lippy discovered the presence of his employer, a fact which so jarred the flow of his eloquence as to make him forget just what it was he intended to say next. No one, however, saw the occasion when Lippy was long without something to say, and the cloud on Jacob Frye's face gave him a cue; with a promptness that was almost flattering and after blinking just twice, but without looking away from the big cattleman, he gathered himself and went on:

"Oh, Mr. Frye, how d' do? Say, 'j-j yuh think you c'n git someone else to take my place with the herd? I'd like awful well to quit right now, mebbe I can recommend some one else in my place."

The look on Mr. Frye's face was not describable in words, and his feelings can be guessed. The little man had snatched from him the satisfaction of peremptory dismissal. Besides, it was not very desirable to make a scene there on the street. Controlling himself, therefore, as best he could, and with the most stinging sarcasm he could crowd into look and words, he told Lippy that he thought they could get along without him. At any rate he'd try his best, "great as the loss was bound to be."

The only other incident of the trip with the herd that was out of the ordinary was when Ames chastised Blackie in a restaurant for an indecent remark to a little waitress, an incident the result of which was found to figure quite prominently in future events. It had been quite generally understood that Blackie was a gun man of the most prompt and plucky type, a glamour, however, that had been quite rudely dispelled when Ames had suddenly reached across a narrow aisle and unceremoniously taken a generous handful of scraggly, black hair on the very top of

Blackie's head. The head had been so violently jostled as to make it difficult for the slender, bony hand to readily find that for which it groped down at the swarthy man's side—groped so long that it groped to no purpose, for before the huge pistol was free from the holster, Ames had jerked the man toward him, reached across his back, wrenched the weapon backward from Blackie, and tucked it between his own knees. After one look that spoke volumes Ames proceeded with his meal, while Blackie stalked out of the eating house, followed immediately by the Mexican and a few seconds later by a big, mustached man who wore a star on the breast of his gray flannel shirt.

The thing, however, that disconcerted Ames most, on the trip, was the change in Eager, who seemed to have developed a sort of dislike. There had been none but friendly or strictly business words between them, and Ames was utterly unable to account for the man's attitude. Eager had given Ames scarcely no orders or instructions; when the change in him became marked Ames had sought all the time to anticipate the sub-foreman's desires and wishes and the needs of every occasion.

It remained, however, for Sam the cook to discover the source of the change in Eager, not long after the return to headquarters.

Determined, if possible, to prevent any strained relations with Eager, Ames made it a studied policy to be sociable with him as with all the others. He had been out to the south pasture one morning and on returning found Eager and Ingle at the house. Still being on the best of terms with the latter, Ames sought to draw the former into the conversation, mainly to show his own entire friendliness and also with the hope of discovering some clue to the cause of the disaffection.

"Hello, Jack," he said good naturedly, deliberately addressing Eager first. The latter was engaged in greasing his lasso, now stretched from the tie post

near the house to a tree some distance away. Eager looked up with a reluctant nod. Ignoring the surliness, Ames smilingly turned to Ingle, who was engaged in making a "quirt," the short heavy riding whip cowboys carry but seldom use.

"Impumanick, Jim?" being Piute for "what do you make?"

"Oh, just tinkerin' a little," Ingle responded with a look that showed he had noticed his companion's manner and wanted to make conversation. "Where you been?" he added.

"Down to the south pasture to see if the fence was all right," Ames answered as he kicked off his chaps and threw them across his saddle.

"As I crossed the wash last night, when bringing in the mustangs, I thought it looked like the last freshet had cut loose one of the posts so that a critter might get out, and I wanted to make sure before we turned the 'weaners' in there."

To the surprise of both the others Eager came into the conversation.

"Yes, you been fixin' a fence," he said, with a rather skimpy smile. "You've been off ridin' with that gal."

It was a start, so Ames chose to assume it as friendly, at least until later.

"She and the boy rode with me to the crossing," he said placidly, "but they went on up the canyon immediately and I haven't seen them since."

"Got to watch yer step, ol' boy," Ingle suggested with a grin, "er they's apt to be a weddin' around here, er some buddy's li'ble tu git a pain under the wish bone ut'l be hard tu cure."

Laughing at this sally, Ames wanted to know if Ingle was jealous, although in truth he meant the question for the other man.

"Jist givin' a little friendly advice," Ingle replied.

"In whose interest, Jim?"

"His own," Eager unexpectedly broke in, making out a little better with the effort to smile.

"Don't you see he can't be decent fer starin' un goo-gooin' whenever she's in sight. Un' he mumbles in his sleep, un' I'm a liar 'f he didn't kiss me las' night in his sleep."

"Yer a bloody liar," Ingle fairly shouted, coloring some at the quip.

"Sure, sure," Eager laughed, "I'd lie any time tu save a friend."

Ames felt somewhat ashamed to allow the girl to be made the topic of such conversation, but he knew also that any deliberate effort on his part to terminate or change it might only make matters worse; so he compromised by following his horse on to the saddle house.

"You poor boob," Ingle came back at Eager, "do you s'pose they's anybuddy on this ranch that Miss Price u'd look twice at, er that Frye u'd let take two looks at her?"

If Ames could but have known it, his good friend was doing a little probing in his interest, quizzing and bantering to ascertain if it were possible that the disproportionate bestowal of Miss Price's attentions had anything to do with Eager's attitude toward Ames, and Eager took the bait.

"I'm not so sure there ain't any one on the ranch that she wouldn't look twice at," and he finished with a significant look in the direction Ames had gone.

Ingle decided to push the matter a little bit farther.

"She does sort of shine up to him, don't she?"

"Huh!" the other retorted, "I wonder 'f the shinin' ain't mu'chal?" and the inflection indicated that it was more the statement of an opinion than it was a question, but Ames' return necessitated changing the subject.

"Did I hear you say samething 'bout puttin' 'Weaners' in the south pasture this fall?" said Eager to Ames as the latter approached.

"Likely you did," Ames admitted.

"I thought Jackson said we'd keep that for relay saddle horses," Eager said doubtfully.

"That was the original intention, but he has changed his mind. Mr. Frye says that there's got to be some cows go off next spring with the steer herd, and Jackson's decided it will be necessary to take the calves away from the cull cows early to give them a chance to get in shape for trailing. The plan is to gather the worst grade of cows to go out with the beef herd and replace them with a better grade bought from the settlements."

"A bunch of 'alfalfas'?" said Ingle with mingled surprise and disgust. "Ye heathen gods! Won't this ranch be some pippin tu work on when they git it stocked with a lot of lucern-feds. Next thing they'll do'll be to buy a bunch o' corn-fed 'feather-legs' fer us tu ride."

Eager was also sarcastic. "'S 'nuf to drive a man tu sheepherdin'," he declared. "Jim," he said, "kin yu 'magine yerself on a pie-footed feather-legged, broom-tailed clyde, trailin' a—a—bunch o' work oxen tu th' railroad? Er goin' out into the roughs on such a mount to corral a bunch o' mustangs?"

"With your help I kin," Ingle admitted. "Un also I kin 'magine myse'f riding a pig un drivin a herd a geese tu market; un I mout be able tu 'magine myse'f ridin' a elafunt un tryin' tu rope a hiponocerous. Er, cummin closter home, I mout 'magin I'se a lizzard riding a Gila Monster cuttin' a rattle-snake out uv' a herd a horney-toads under a cactus."

"Who-o-e!" Ames exclaimed, fanning Ingle with his hat, "get some water. Get the snake bite! Run for the doctor!"

Ingle joined in the laughter, but he spoke sarcastically.

"All the same, it's 'nuf to make a self-respectin' range steer choke hisse'f tu death, er a decent cow-horse jump off a cliff."

"You talk, Jim, as though the principal object of the cattle business was fun, and that the only fun

was in breaking mustangs and chasing wild cattle on cayuses," Ames put in.

"The cattle bizniss is the cattle bizniss, un farmin's farmin', un when ye git tu mixin um it ain't no bizniss a tall."

"But you must remember, Jimmy, that the range is being taken up and that a few acres of alfalfa will winter more cattle than a township of range."

"Yes, the range is being 'taken up' like hell, in these parts," Ingle countered. "The on'y reason I kin stummick Jake Frye un' the kind o' bosses he has is that he's a shore 'nuf cow man that's gittin' his range un keepin' it. 'Range being taken up?' Yu ain't noticed it much around here, have yu?"

"Not much so far," Ames admitted, "but it's bound to be, sooner or later."

"Mostly 'later'," Ingle insisted. "Who's tuck up any land in thirty-five miles frum here? Un what's more, who's goin' to while Jake Frye's on the job in these parts? Where's the nester that settled on Cottonwood, un the Mormon ut thought he'd stick it out on Short Creek, un the Swede that started on the Casino? Un last, but not least:

> Where oh where has my little man gone;
> Where, oh where did he go?
> The Nester man who once began
> Way down on the Shinimo?

as Billy McGlone sings? Echo answers, 'Where?' but that ain't Jake Frye's answer, ner Behannan's, ner José's. At any rate, they've gone, hain't they? Un what's more, they won't be incouragin' anybuddy else to try settlin' hereabouts."

Ames did not want to seem too definitely opposed to the settled policy of Mr. Frye,—at least not just yet, but he was curious to ascertain just how far the boys were committed to the present policy.

"Well, with the demand there is for land and the number of people there are who ought to have land," he persisted, "it's not beyond the possibilities that Frye

may over-play his hand and get his bluff called by someone with a full hand. What if the Government should send in someone to investigate Frye's methods?"

"That's the easiest and the funniest part 'bout the hull scheme," Ingle replied. "They say that Frye's got sich a pull with the Gov'ment that he ain't a damn bit worried on that account. The ol' boy's ben in the guv'ment hisself un knows the ropes. Jackson says he had some kind uv a job with the gov'ment men that looks after the Injuns, and knows enuf 'bout the way some uv the big guns done—senators er congress fellers—ut they don't dast tu let him be picked on. Besides, Jackson says ut they ain't a dam gov'ment man on the job but whut either knows too much er too little."

"Even that doesn't prove that some time one will not come along who knows just enough and plenty," Ames suggested.

"Well, 'cordin' to Jackson, they ain't none such," Ingle declared. "Un b'sides he says b'fore the guv'-ment does anything Frye un his crowd u'll have all the water fer forty er fifty miles 'nailed', un nen what in hell kin the guv'ment er anybuddy else do. The country 'uthout the water ain't goin' to do nobuddy else no good. So you see it's only a matter uv holdin' yer nip fer a while. Every boob in jail knows ut a high hand ain't no good after the bluff's worked un the stakes is raked in. Whut's the good uv holdin' the high hand 'f you ain't got sense 'nuf tu play it? 'Bout the time the guv'ment thinks it's got the 'high hand' Frye'll have the hunch and jist say, kind a innocent like: 'Nothin' doin' this hand, Uncle, I'll jist chuck the ante'; un nen whut 'n hell yer Uncle gonna do? He can't win on'y whut's on the board, kin he? Whut Frye's pocketed is velvet, un yu can't make a man bet whut's in 'is pocket if he don't want to, kin yu."

"It's clear, Jim, that you weren't born yesterday.

I guess yer workin' fer the right man," said Ames, feigning amusement and unconcern.

"I dunno," Ingle declared, "If the ol' boy's gona turn granger un change the saddle horse for a mowin' machine un the lasso for a pitch fork, I don't think I'm ekal tu the change uv speed un motion."

"It's not at all uncommon for the big ranchers to put up hay nowadays," Ames explained.

"None o' that fer mine. The good ole year-long range un the mustang ki'use is my style."

"But it's getting so there's not so awfully much country where the year-long range can be relied upon, and with the sheep crowding in some feeding is getting to be necessary."

"Sheep!" Ingle made the word reek with disgust. "There you go agin. You'll be tellin us next that we're goin' inta the sheep bisness on this ranch, un then I shore will be bughouse."

Ames had to smile at the intensity of the cowboy's disgust for sheep. "You absolutely and positively refuse to be civilized, do you, James Edison Ingle?"

Ingle knew he was joshing, of course, but all the same he proposed to be thoroughly understood. "Civilized!" he said, fairly gasping as he pronounced the word. "Civ—if civilization's a choice b'tween taggin' after a bunch o'—o' sheeps, er shovelin' alfalfa —d' you know whut I'd do?"—he motioned with his pocket knife by way of emphasis—"I'd go out here on the range un rope the biggest, fastest, un meanest mustang on the range and tie his tail round my neck un turn 'im loose to kick my brains out, un nen run hisse'f tu death as the happiest endin' fer both uv us, un our dyin' protest aginst—aginst yer dam civilization! Alfalfa an' 'the woolies'—'scuse me!"

"An awful prejudice, James Ingle, an awful prejudice," Ames declared. Though he said it smilingly as he turned to leave, he saw in his friend's manner the explanation of how Frye could get help, and that too from some very good men.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"WE MUST SOUND HIM OUT"

AMES knew that it would not be advisable to manifest direct opposition to Ingle's views, so he had pressed the conversation in a jocular vein and had, without committing himself, obtained a very thorough understanding of the views of his friend, but was not satisfied with the results as applied to Eager, who had dropped out of the conversation. Much more light as to Eager's attitude would have been gained if Ames could have heard the conversation that immediately followed his departure.

"Gettin' to be some punkins, ain't he?" Eager had said as soon as Ames was out of hearing. "Leggin' to git to be 'straw boss', or I'll eat my hat!"

Ingle did not reply but Sam, the cook, had just stepped out on the porch and caught Eager's aspersion. Immediately he took up the gage of verbal battle for a friend.

"Why not?" he challenged. "He's all right, isn't he?"

"Oh, he's all right, I guess—not," Eager sneered. "He thinks he's too damned smart. Cuffin' everybody around."

Sam had heard of the incident at Milford, and assumed the reference was to that.

"Who's he cuffed that didn't need it?" he asked.

"Well, he'll find out in time," Eager snapped.

"Why? Do you think Blackie dare tackle him?"

"You betch 'er sweet life he'll tackle 'im."

"I'll bet he doesn't do it in a fair and open manner, either bare-handed or armed," the cook averred with spirit. "And besides, how much did ole' Blackie get that wasn't coming to him? Acting and talking the way he did to that poor little girl?"

Eager had no logical rejoinder, so he didn't attempt

one. "Who's he, tu be kickin' up a rumpus like that? The tenderfoot!"

"Tenderfoot?" Sam repeated with a very different emphasis. "Not on yer life! That lad's not been on the ranch as long as some others, of course, but what's the odds? He's a first rate feller. What's eatin' yu anyway? Don't he treat everybody right? And don't he do his work all right?"

Still Eager did not deign a direct response. "A great broncho buster he is, I must say," was the way he dodged.

"Oh—ho! I see where the boysie's bit!" The cook assumed an air of banter. "Sore because he's taken to breaking his own horses! 'Fraid your reputation's in danger, heh? Oh, I get ye now."

"I ain't 'fraid o' nuthin'. He can't ride a wagon with the box on un the cover tied down!"

"Can't, eh? Do you know what yer talkin' about? Didn't that 'Smut' horse try his very best to throw him not more than four days ago? And didn't he give old 'Smutty' the steel good an plenty? What're yu talkin', man? There isn't a bettter rider on the ranch. You think that because he don't git on to a poor, scared mustang and go to beating it over the head and spurring blood out all over it, that he's afraid. No, you don't either! You know he's not afraid. He simply uses a little more sense than some fellers I know, un tries to gentle a broncho an' teach it something instead of abusing it and scaring out of it what sense it does have."

"What do you know 'bout breakin' bronchos, anyhow?" questioned Eager, now too sullen to try to be logical.

"Not much, I'll admit," smiled the cook. "Just enough not to try it myself. But don't cry, sonny, Ames doesn't want your job. He seems to find plenty to do and does it pretty well, an example that, in my humble opinion, some others on this ranch would do well to follow."

"He's tryin' to git to be 'straw boss' an' maybe foreman. Shinin' up to Mr. Frye's niece—and—"

"Huh! Looks to me like the shining comes the other way."

"Oh, no, he isn't a bit nice to her, is he?"

"He'd have to be positively uncivil to be different than he is. She likes his company and has him do some things for her."

The cowboy was no match for the cook in a verbal duel like this, especially in his present mood, and, besides, facts were too much against him. It looked as though he would capitulate when he admitted that "he was not sayin' that *she* ain't some stuck on *him.*"

"And not without some reason, I'm saying," the cook still persisted. "He keeps busy when the other ginks are loafing or snoozing or playin' cards. He treats decently all who deserve it. He rides and ropes well, and puts it all over every man jack of you in readin', writin', and talkin'. If he wants to be foreman he's gonna be—take it from me, and you'll do a darn sight better to help him than to knock."

Evidently the cowboy saw the point of this last argument. "Oh, I ain't got nothin' against him perticlar—an' b'sides, I don't hafta stay here 'f I don't want to," he conceded.

"Of course you can leave if you want to, but you've got another guess coming if you think you can haze that man off this ranch if he wants to stay here. Throw away yer hammer, Jack, you'll be a heap better off."

Eager was somewhat mollified, but still a little sullen as he admitted that "he ain't so bad—but—"

" 'But' nothing," Sam broke in, "you go away out back of the corral and bury that grouch. It's excess baggage and not worth luggin' around."

"I gotta go help Jim ketch his horse," Eager declared, catching at an excuse to terminate the discussion. "He's cussin' like a Irish driver of a ten-mule-team in a rocky ford."

"That's the trouble with too many of these dubs," the cook asserted, speaking to himself as he turned to go back in the house. "They mistake bluff for nerve and noise for sense."

"What's that, Sam?" Ames asked, coming around the corner of the house. "You lecturing some one, or just soliloquizing?"

"Both," declared the cook. "A lecture around here might as well be a soliloquy—there's so little brains to receive it—present company excepted, Mr. Ames," he added with a smile and bow.

"Thanks, Sam," Ames smiled. He went on seriously, "I overheard some of your remarks to Jack, Sam, and I want to ask you not to discuss me or my doings with them very much—in fact, not at all, except in the most casual way. Some of the boys are inclined to be a little sore at me and it only irritates them to talk of me in their presence, especially to make any favorable comments. They're all of them older than I am, both in years and in time on the ranch. I want to make them feel that I want their good will. Will you help me in this, Sam?"

"I will, yes, if I can hold my tongue and my patience," Sam promised. "But some of these dubs around here make me feel like cussin' every time I see 'em. They're nothin' but a bunch of bullies and outlaws—some of them. I can't have any patience with an outfit that can be hired to do the things they do. And the hell-of-it is that Jackson and Frye himself don't seem to want any other kind, unless it's you, and I'll bet they won't want you when they find out you won't help 'em with their dirty work."

"Well, possibly not, and I'm not going to help them in their dirty work. I do as well as I can around the ranch and am learning the business. I'm starting a place of my own, way over beyond Wigwam. I've got a man there looking after it and I came over here to put in some time and earn a little money to help buy some cattle to stock my place."

"It's a good thing you are away off, or they'd likely serve you like they did that young feller on Shinimo. Wasn't that fierce though? They say he went plumb bug-house the way they treated him. He hasn't been heard of since, though it wouldn't surprise me none if he showed up here some day and cleaned out the whole gang."

"Sam, that young man was a very dear friend of mine—more than a friend. My parents died when I was very young, and his mother looked after me as if she was my own mother, and—and that boy was like a brother to me. I've been sticking around here hoping I could protect and help in some way and at the very time when I ought to have been on hand to help him I was clear out of reach. I am sure it was a prearranged scheme. Jackson had me stop at Kanab to get supplies, and before I got here they went and burned his buildings and fences, turned a big stream of water on his newly cleared and planted land and literally washed it away. They even burned his clothes books, papers, and his letters from his sweetheart, his mother, and sister."

Ames spoke with strong emotions of alternate anger, chagrin, and pity, and Sam surreptitiously wiped his eyes with his apron.

After a pause Ames went on:

"I slipped over there to see what had happened and it made me sick—plumb heart-sick—to see that ghastly funeral pyre of such splendid efforts and such high hopes. Sam, sometimes I can scarcely restrain the almost overmastering impulse to take a gun and clean out the whole cursed pack of them."

"No square man would blame you," the cook declared. "I don't believe God Himself would. The low-down, dirty dogs. What in hell's the gover'ment for if it lets things like that go on?"

"The government," Ames explained, "is no more nor less than what the people who make it and the men who administer it want it to be. The trouble is that

the people don't understand what ought to be done, and the officials, even if they want to do better, are handicapped as to means and methods. Even honesty of purpose isn't the only requisite to accomplishment. When a sufficient percentage of the public get the desire for better conditions they'll find a way. The present task is to make them understand, and it seems that there is—that there never has been—a great awakening of public conscience brought about without sacrifice—much sacrifice, by some one. While, as you say, the things that have been done right here are almost beyond human belief, especially in a country supposed to have laws and a form of government, I cannot but feel that they are the darkness before the dawn. I refuse to believe that all these sacrifices are in vain. Even of the unwarranted and barbarous abuse suffered by my own boyhood friend, Judson Keith, I try to think his earnest heroic efforts must yet find their reward in the part they will play in bringing about a better condition. My deepest regret and concern is the fear that he will blame me in some way for what happened."

"I don't see why he should do that."

"Because he will think—and rightly too,—that there should have been some effort on my part to prevent it. God knows I would have if I had known in time. I appreciate, however, that he can not know why I could do nothing and, honest as the statement may be, telling him why is going to be mighty poor consolation."

"It seems to me anyone can tell you're an honest man, and I know mighty well, as do one or two others around here, that you have the courage of your convictions."

"I hope I have. But, Sam, we must not blame a man who has been imposed upon as my friend has, and who has suffered what he has, if he is not able to look at things exactly in their true light. Grief, disappointment, and honest anger are apt to warp the

view and affect the actions of even mighty good and honest men."

After a pause Ames went on.

"Sam, that friend of mine is no coward, and no quitter. I can't tell what he is going to do next, but if he shows up on this ranch or you hear anything of him here, or anywhere, I want you to let me know. I want to square myself with him if there is any possible way. At the same time I want to keep him from doing anything rash. There's too much at stake —too much depending upon him."

Slowly and as though speaking to himself, Ames added:

"He must not do anything rash. He simply must not. You'll help me, won't you, Sam?" he finished with a look of appeal.

"Write it in your hat, old man, I sure will," Sam vouchsafed. "I believe if you'll say the word I'll pizen the whole damn caboodly of 'em."

"No, Sam, not that—not anything like that," said Ames, surprised at the cook's earnestness. "We must find some other way. I don't want to get you or anyone else in trouble, but I do—I do want to keep Keith *out of trouble.* I must do that if I can. That's the only reason in God's world I'm here now, to tell you the truth."

"As you say, Mr. Ames, I'm your friend, and your friend's friend. Count on me."

"I'd shake your hand on that, Sam," Ames declared, fervently, "but I see the team coming and I don't want to draw any suspicion on myself just now, much less throw any on you. You better fix lunch for them and I'll go take care of the team."

As Ames went on his self-imposed errand, Sam hurried into the house. A moment later Jackson and Frye came to the house, talking as they approached, and looking back in the direction of Ames.

"He seems to be all right yet, does he?" Mr. Frye asked of his foreman.

"Yes, he's a purty good hand—in fact, the best man on the ranch, so far as interest and care is concerned," Jackson assured him, "and if he can only be trusted he's gonna be worth keepin'. I was suspicious of him being in cahoots with that young nester on Shinimo so when we went down to clean the nester out I held him in town for provisions. When he got back it was all over, and I watched him mighty close while the boys was talking about it and he didn't bat an eye. He sort of sucked in his breath and went a little white around the gills, but I concluded it was because of the idea of that sort of business—but otherwise he's doin' fine."

"We must sound him out pretty thoroughly and if he'll stand hitched and don't set back and try to bust something I think I can use him to very good advantage."

A moment later the cook announced that their lunch was ready, and the two men entered the house.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A DISCOVERY THAT DIDN'T DISCOVER

A FEW moments after Frye and Jackson had entered the house Ames came from the saddle house carrying the wreck of a pack-saddle. He took it to the improvised work bench near a forge under the trees in front of the house. An anvil had been placed on a stump of one of the trees. Whistling softly as he worked Ames proceeded to repair the broken straps of the rigging.

"Going to tinker her up a bit?" Ingle asked as he approached from the direction of the corral.

"Looks as though it needed it, doesn't it?" Ames replied as he looked up smiling.

"That the one Ol' Toquer rolled off the trail with?" Ingle inquired.

"No, I think this is the one Jack let the mule get away with when it was only partly fastened on."

"Oh, yes," and the cowboy grinned. "Jackson don't know 'bout that 'n less you told 'im. It's a wonder they's anything left of it at all. Whut're you fixin' it for? I'd let Jack do it."

"Oh, just to keep busy, and because it needs it."

"Well," and Ingle made a pause meant to be impressive, "when you've been here long enough you'll learn that the best rule on this ranch is to do whut you're told, let other things alone, fergit much and say little."

"Why?" Ames asked.

"Oh," said Ingle with a deprecatory gesture and shrug, "jist 'cause it's the best way." As though to avoid further discussion or explanation he started for the bunk house and Ames went on with his work, pondering the implication in his friend's remarks and glad that, though Ingle was firmly wedded to the idea that grazing on the open range was the only way to

engage in the cattle business, he had pretty definite scruples against some of the methods used to control the range. The sound of a running horse caused Ames to turn; a look of concern overspread his face as he saw the boy Elmer alone and riding excitedly toward him.

"Oh, Mr. Ames," the boy shouted, as soon as he was within hearing. "Sister's lost—up—in the forest."

"Lost? How did—did you leave the canyon and go out on the plateau in the timber?" Ames asked anxiously.

"Yes,—yes, sir," the boy stammered. "We separated—just a little—and I was—riding along the ridge and—she was in the canyon just a little way to the left—and I saw some deer—and called her to come—and they went over a little hill—and I followed a little way—and she didn't come—and I waited a little while and she didn't come—and I went back to the place where I left her and it wasn't the same place—and she wasn't there—and I rode all around there, all around there, close and—"

"Did you hallo or call to her?"

"No, sir, I was afraid it would—scare her—and besides—I—didn't like to holler. I was—I was—and she couldn't answer because she wasn't there if I had of hollered. I could see she wasn't there or I would have hollered, but I was—I— But what good does it do to holler when they aren't there to hear? I—"

"Did you come home then?" Ames asked, seeing that only questions would elicit the necessary facts from the excited boy. "How far was it? How long since you separated?"

"Oh, it was when she got lost—since then. We haven't seen each other since. She's lost, you know. Shall I tell uncle?"

"No, not until you tell me how long ago it was when you separated," he replied with some vexation.

"It was then, when we—when she got lost."

"But, tell me," said Ames taking the boy by the

shoulder, "boy, how long ago? Was it an hour or a half-hour, or two hours, or what?"

"Yes."

"Yes, what?" Ames' patience was exhausted.

"Yes, *sir.*"

"Well, for Heaven's sake—! Say, you pile onto that horse and hike right back down the road. I'll get my horse and catch you before you get out of sight," Ames fairly snapped, deciding to take the boy to the place where he had last seen his sister.

"Pile on to him?" said the unsophisticated lad. "What's that?"

"Get on to him. Mount him and—"

"What's 'hike'?"

"It's to go, trot, or lope—go as fast as you can." Ames seized the boy by the shoulder, carried him to his horse, and deposited him rather unceremoniously in the saddle. "There, that's what 'pile on' means. Now beat it right back up the road. I'll catch you in three minutes. You must take me to the place where you left your sister. If we don't find her very soon we must get the other men out."

"Talk about your gourdheads!" Ames fumed as he started for his saddle horse. "That kid's the very limit."

A moment later he rode hurriedly to the gate, opened it while mounted, and dashed off to overtake the boy.

The cook, happening on the porch and Eager, coming from the corral, had seen Ames dash away.

"What's the excitement?" the cook inquired as they stood looking the way Ames had gone.

"Don't know," replied Eager. "That kid rode up and told him something and he rushed out and got his horse and hit out. Must be something about the girl."

Mr. Frye inside the house overheard the last remark.

"What's that?" he said, throwing open the door. "Something wrong with Neva? What is it? Where is she?" he shouted excitedly.

"I don't know," Eager explained. "She went off this

morning with Ames and her brother. Ames says he left them at the crossing to go fix that south pasture fence at the wash. He got back an hour or more ago. Said they went on up the canyon,—I think. Just a minute er two ago the kid come back un told Ames something un he rushed over un got his horse and him and the kid's foggin' it back up the road."

"Maybe they're just fooling," the cook hazarded.

"No, Lew was some excited, all right," Eager declared.

"Well, why the hell don't some of you do something?" Frye fumed. "Get me a saddle horse, some one! Damn it, get a move on you!" The big man came down off the porch frowning like a thunder cloud.

"Jackson, Ingle," he shouted again. "Bring me a horse and git a move on you."

The cook had been watching the road intently.

"I believe they're coming back," he said. "No—yes, it is, and they're all three there." He hastened to inform the others.

"Yes, it's them—all three of them," Mr. Frye declared with manifest relief. "Jack, go take the horses and tell Neeva and that kid to come in. You're sure those horses are thoroughly gentle?" he inquired of Jackson.

"Yes, gentle enough," the foreman assured him. "Gentlest there is on the ranch. So gentle that they're scarcely any use. And," he continued as Mr. Frye turned into the house, "I wish they would git some good scare so they'd let the horses alone. This is no ridin' school. Horses on this ranch are needed for work." He went grumbling into the house.

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Ames," Miss Price said as they met some distance up the road. "There wasn't the least bit of cause for alarm."

"Elmer," she said with decision, "you go tend your own horse. You need the experience," and then went on with her explanation:

"When Elmer didn't come back I rode up on the ridge and called, but he didn't answer. Pretty soon I saw him some distance away heading for home, and I knew he was excited and didn't hear me call and knew then that he'd likely rush in and excite everybody on the ranch, so of course I hastened in."

"It was very kind of you Mr. Ames, I'm sure," she continued, after a pause, and with more formality than Ames liked, "and I'd like you to know how much I appreciate your consideration. Uncle Jay is so busy and Elmer so green and the other men so awkward and distant and it seems that I *must* be a nuisance to someone."

"Oh, not that, Miss Price," Ames assured her. "As you say, the other boys are somewhat distant,—rather out of their element, I should say, when it comes to looking after the ladies. They're better with the cattle and horses," he remarked with a smile, "and I'm learning that from them."

"Seems to me you've made much greater progress than they are ever likely to," she volunteered.

"It is my sincere desire to be as useful as possible," Ames answered, a little assured by her last remark. "I appreciate my handicap and so must try all the harder on that account."

"And here I come interrupting you every little while," the girl declared. "Really I should be ashamed of myself, but I keep thinking Elmer will get so he can do things more himself. He's been kept at home so closely that he's no use in this environment, and because neither Uncle Jay nor the other men have any patience with him I have tried to give him a little hardening for his own good. I *must* do it in fact. Mamma pampered him and his two Aunties made such a sissy of him that when I found Uncle would not take him in hand I simply had to do it."

"I'm sure that's good of you—splendid," Ames averred sincerely. "If it did not sound like ignorance

of my own limitations I should be glad to offer more of my services—such as they are."

"It's quite clear that you have already appreciated the situation," the girl asserted, "and I'm very sure that we—that I am under very great obligations. It was only to be expected that the ranch hands would find in Elmer only an object of curiosity and amusement and treat him accordingly, and your defense and interest in him has been splendid, considering the annoyance I know he must be. But for your manifest understanding of the situation and kindly offices I'm afraid I should have given up and gone home before now."

"I am very sure, Miss Price," Ames said with some visible emotion, "that if you knew the extent to which, for much of my life, I was dependent upon others by reason of a distressing accident that robbed me of both my parents, you would be able to understand how utterly wanting of appreciation of those kindnesses I would be if I did not respond to every opportunity of service, especially to any or to all who may be unfortunately deprived of the usual care that children should have. It has been clear to me that you are here in the commendable sisterly effort to supplement —or, may I say, to correct—some of the deficiencies in your brother's past training, and I want you to know that it is more than a pleasure to me to be able, in some small way, to be of service to you both. It is something in the nature of a satisfaction that comes from a sense of opportunity to prove a very sincere gratitude which I owe my own good benefactors from whose service fate seems to shut me away."

The statement seemed to be one difficult of answer, or even of comment. They had almost unconsciously walked on past the house, past the girl's tent, and found themselves on top of a little rise that sloped gradually up from the ranch buildings and just here dropped abruptly down again. A few steps more would take them out of view of the house and while

neither of them knew definitely of any particular thing he or she desired to say, yet both felt that there was something unsaid. Ames was not yet certain as to his own course, but was conscious that he loved this sweet, pure, self-reliant and yet utterly unselfish girl, giving the very bloom of her life to the task of making a man of a previously pampered brother. He knew that his heart was honorably free from any obligation to Janice Kane, but there was the probability of a clash of interest with this girl's uncle. Hence he could not determine the extent to which his duty might, in the girl's eyes, seem to impugn the purity of his motive in speaking the love he honestly felt. He could not bear the thought of saying or doing anything that could in the remotest way suggest the suspicion that he sought the girl as any part of a scheme to combat the plans of her uncle or to further his own interests. At the moment, he felt that to speak his feelings, to get some slight token of her regard beyond that of friendship, was worth any possible cost. This feeling had been enhanced by the fact that since his return from the trip with the steer herd she had seemed decidedly more formal—he could not say more cold; but something seemed to have dulled the edge of the free and easy comradeship that had characterized their former association.

Between the danger of speaking before a clear discernment of the course of duty and of delaying too long, Ames cudgeled his brain to evolve a course that would save him from the last possibility without committing him to any selfish compromise with his sense of duty. Should he, as casually as possible, make known the state of his feelings and stop at that, eliciting no expression from her? In the first place, could he trust himself? In the second place, would it be fair to the girl? In the third place, how could he surely know that it might not after all be the means of binding his honor in such a way as to conflict with ultimate duty? In other words, if he pledged his love

would she not be entitled to claim its fruits even though their bestowal might require him to swerve from the previously determined path? Yes, there was the possibility of acceptance of one obligation rendering impossible the discharge of another. And so, while his heart pleaded for utterance—for freedom of pent-up feelings,—his head again said: "Wait, wait."

As they turned, the conflict was decided and love once more made to wait on duty.

"So, Miss Price," he said as they walked again toward the house, "I want you to feel very sure that I deem it more than mere pleasure to be of any possible assistance to you."

With such difficulty did he restrain himself that he had to look away from her resolutely.

"You have more than proven that," she said, "and already placed us under an obligation that I fear we may never be able to repay."

"The pleasure of the service has been full compensation. Please believe that," he pleaded, his sincerity clearly manifest in his manner, "for don't you see from that viewpoint there's consolation for us both."

He finished, smiling, but checked it as he noticed—he did not know what—something more than seriousness in the girl's mien. Was it pain? He, of course, could not know the agony of some of the moments since her uncle had sought to plant in her mind the poisonous suspicion that there was a mercenary motive in Ames' conduct—even in his manifest tenderness toward her and in his interest in her brother. As she recalled some of her thoughts since the memorable interview with her uncle, she was almost sick at the thought of how deadly a venom is innuendo, breeding suspicion so potent and so sinister that pure love becomes affected, yes, destroyed at times, by its baneful breath.

"Thank you very much," she said and gave him her hand, but the look was fleeting—evasive. She was thinking as she walked away that she had flattered

herself that her regard for Lewis Ames was absolutely genuine, that it was grounded in good judgment, based upon a dispassionate disinterestedness with which she had studied the man as a man. She could conceive of no sounder basis or safer soil in which to plant the seeds of soul-union—that thing we call love. And yet she recognized now how, after her uncle's oblique hints, she had gone away and discovered what she had not noticed at all before—that there had been in all Ames' attentions a calm, firm deliberateness, as though from a man with perfect control of himself and a clear, set purpose. In other words, there had seemed too much of method and not enough of the element of abandon that gives zest to love and marks the real lover. The peculiar, almost the tragic, thing about it all was the fact that while her analysis was correct and, therefore, a compliment to her keenness of mind, her deduction had been entirely and utterly false. Nor did the sophistry of her disturbed attempt at reasoning, stop there. If Ames' possible manifestations of love were forced, deliberate, and not spontaneous, they were of course insincere, or, what is just as bad, were sincere only as the necessary part of some selfish purpose. From such a premise it was easy to go on. If he personally or as the agent of others had the deliberate purpose of again getting control of the property and the range her uncle had acquired, how natural it would be—as her uncle had pointed out—for him to desire to win the chief legal heir. At this point in her cogitations the whole scheme struck her as impossible of belief, yet, like some hideous dream, it left its impression—not rational, not real, but yet haunting, disturbing. She had made up her mind very definitely that she would thereafter make careful analysis of his conduct and come to a definite conclusion as to the character of the man and his purpose. In this effort she had found out that if Ames was an adventurer he was most adept at feigning disinterestedness and high motive, so adept, in

fact, that these qualities seemed actually to emanate from him with no manifestation of conscious effort. Nearly every time they had met since his return she had intended to try to trick him into betrayal of his real sentiments, but, once in his presence, could never bring herself to the point. Today she had feigned nothing, yet found what she sought, only to discover in it a new dread. When he spoke of his past dependence upon others, and of his being shut away from their service, of the sense of more than pleasure—of opportunity to prove his gratitude, she was convinced; would stake her life on his sincerity, a sincerity that did not live with hypocrisy nor mercenary motive. But, admitting all that, might it not be mere charity, —aye, pity, that was the underlying motive? Granting the genuineness of his unselfish purpose it might be mere gratitude, vicariously bestowed, and not that other and more perfect sentiment that prompted his generous service. So, in finding one treasure had she not lost another and more precious one? She comforted herself to some extent with the fact of having satisfied herself that he was the man she had previously believed. Yes, the *man.* She had found the mystic agent that had extracted the poison of suspicion from her cup, but alas, had also taken much, if not *most,* of its sweetness.

"Anyhow," she said as she reached the seclusion of her bower, "he's grand,—*simply* grand!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"IT WAS ALL I COULD TELL HER—NOW"

JUST a few minutes after Ames had resumed his work at repairing the pack-saddle, Ingle, who was again with him, as was his wont when their assignments did not separate them, looked up and discovered two men driving a couple of burros with packs towards the ranch.

"Hello," he said with mild surprise, "who's the burro boys?"

"Prospectors, evidently," Ames suggested, basing the opinion upon the appearance of the outfit. "Believe I've seen them before, somewhere."

As the men approached, Mr. Frye and his foreman came out of the house. A look of recognition on Mr. Frye's face gave way immediately to one of perplexity as he glanced from the newcomers to his foreman.

"Howdy, gents?" said the heavier of the two men with wheezy brusqueness, being no other than our old friend Weems, he of the cactus episode and "Family Album" fame, but with no sign of recognition of anyone present.

"Who's the boss here?" he went on when Ames and Ingle had acknowledged the salutation.

"Mr. Jackson, there," Ingle answered, pointing to the two men on the porch, toward whom Weems now proceeded.

Mr. Frye came hurriedly down off the porch to meet him.

"Be you Mr. Jackson?" Weems asked as he shook hands with Frye.

"That's right," Mr. Frye said, sotto voce, and with significant nod and wink, "keep it up until I can clear the premises. That's Jackson on the porch."

They conversed together in an undertone, looking

furtively around as they did so. Ingle went toward Jackson, assuming there would be some orders, and the other arrival, whom we knew in Shinimo as Mr. Ward, went across to Ames.

"Are you Lew Ames?" he said quietly.

"Yes, sir," Ames replied with some surprise.

"Take what I give you and cache it quick," said Ward in a subdued tone. "See you later," and turning his back to Ames, he looked unconcernedly around as he held behind him a small card nearly concealed in his hand. Ames took the card and Ward walked away.

"This is the superintendent," Mr. Frye stated, speaking to Ward and Weems, and indicating Jackson.

"Jackson, these men are out of provisions. Let them have what they need."

"All right, gents, bring your packs right over here to the bunk-house," Jackson directed, leading the way.

As Jackson turned, Frye again whispered to Weems, "Keep stalling until I give you the word," he said. "I'll send Jackson off, then you come in the house. Better leave your partner outside. Let him stay with that man there," indicating Ames down by the forge.

"Jist ez you say, Jake," Weems asserted. "I think he's O. K., but we don't need 'im anyhow."

"Who is he, anyhow, and where did you get him?" Mr. Frye inquired.

"Oh, he hardly knows who 'e is hisself," Weems explained. "Ward's 'is name. He's a 'down-and-out' they had penned at Flagstaff un got sick un wuz cryin' around about wantin' to git out whur 'e cud fergit hisself un everbuddy else. 'Pears he had a purty good edgecashun un 'herited a little munny back East summ'ers un blowed ut all in raisin' all kinds o' hell, un when ut uz all gone put over a little uv th' phony un gut nipped. They dudn't c'nvick 'im but the dam guv'ment detectives dogged 'im tull 'e beat ut out here un lost hisself. He's a harmless sort uv a cuss in general, but hell agin the law, specially 'gin th' gov'ment. Say 'guv'ment' ur spechly 'guv'ment man'

tu 'im un he'll throw a sixteen mule power fit in a jiffy."

"Does he do that when he's in town and among people?" Frye asked with some concern.

"Oh, no, not edzakly," Weems assured him. "He's learnt caution, un kin act up purty good when 'e needs to."

"He ought to be a pretty good man for us. But then maybe we'd just as well leave him out till I get your report. As you know, I'm kind o' 'fraid you or Jackson, or both of you, sort of made a mess the way you handled that nester down in Shinimo. That was pretty raw, and he's ducked out and no telling what he'll stir up."

"I dunno nothin' bout that," Weems averred, just a bit peevishly. "I sent yu word 'ut the mineral location dodge wouldn't work un tol' yu why. Whut you done, er Jackson done, after that, I don' know. I jist put up—er leastwise give Mister Nester the fake scrip notice like you used on the Mormon, un them Swedes, un let ut go ut that."

"Well, I guess you ain't any to blame," Frye hastened to concede, "but when Jackson found out that the scrip bluff wouldn't work, he sort of lost his head and went over and cleaned the young feller out slick-and-clean."

"Well, when ut comes tu that, I guess he didn't go no further'n you would yerself under the circumstances."

Manifestly, the florid Mr. Weems did not quake nor quail before the august Mr. Frye, whatever may have been their former relationship.

"Oh, well, there's *ways* and *ways* of doing things," Mr. Frye declared a little peevishly. "I did tell Jackson to get him out, but I thought he'd realize he was not in Mexico now. That would be no muss at all down there."

Weems was almost snappish.

"Of course it's the possible results and not the means

yer worrin' over," he said getting a little redder, "but you gotta remember that when you order a thing done in any or the on'y way it kin be done, you gotta stan' by the con'squences. Some uv us has put over some purty raw ones fer you in ways uv yer own choosin', 'n if it's gonna be yer pol'cy to grumble at it yer gonna come shy o' gittin' all yu ast, 'r else take more'n ye expect."

Mr. Frye seemed to want to placate.

"Why, what's the matter with you, Weems? I haven't criticised you, have I?"

"Well, it 'mounts tu the same thing when yu kick ut a feller ut done yer biddin'. They's just this much about ut, 'f you've concluded 't you've gone too fer, say yu hev, un don't be tryin' t' stand frum under b' puttin' it on some one 'uts helped yu un done no more'n they's told."

"Cut the preachin', Weems," Frye requested. "We've got nothing to quarrel about. I know what I owe you and you'll get it. So will everyone else; but times are changing, and, while of course, I must stand by what's done, still there's good reason for changing our methods. The time demands it."

"Then let us all in on the changes, z' all I got tu say," Weems demanded still peevishly.

"Certainly," Frye agreed, "I ought to have been more explicit in my request to Jackson. I will be, after this," and they went into the house.

As they did so, Ames glanced furtively around, then produced the card and read: "John M. Howard, Bureau of Investigation, U. S. Department of Justice."

"All right, 'John M', old boy," he said, "if you're what you say you are, you and I are probably a pair. Furthermore, if you're the genuine article—in poker language—we're probably a 'full' or a 'straight flush.'" And he resumed his work. After a pause he looked up, looked carefully around, then went up to the cook-house window and tapped lightly. Sam slid the window and they conversed a moment, after which

Ames beckoned to Ward as he came from the rear of the house.

"It's all right," he said. "They're in the house and you and I can talk freely. They can see, but can't hear, and it's better than if we tried to meet surreptitiously. How did you know my name? And what's your game?"

Ward hesitated a moment, looking intently at Ames. "If I knew really and truly why you are here, I'd take a chance on you. Will you tell me that?" he finally asked.

"You must excuse me, sir, for asking," Ames replied, determined to be cautious, "but why do you assume that I am here other than as a ranch hand?"

"I assume nothing in that respect. I know your purpose here is more than to work with this outfit," Ward avowed.

"That could be an assumption."

"It could be, yes, but it isn't. I am appreciative of your situation, and aware that to make known your purpose might be to destroy the probability of its accomplishment. To show you my honesty of motive and earn your confidence by giving you mine I'll tell you who I am and how I know who you are, and something of your purpose. First, however, to prove *your* confidence, will you give me back my card?"

Ames guardedly handed back the card.

"Thanks. Now, Mr. Ames, that card tells the truth, so far as it goes. Besides being an investigator in the Department of Justice of the United States Government, I am a detective in the employ of Mr. Jacob Frye, the business of myself and partner being to ferrit out and forestall attempts at settlement upon or the acquisition of any land of water rights on or near the range of the Bar-T Cattle Company. How I became thus employed is too long a story for consideration now. Suffice it to say that I found it desirable to become the partner and confidant of a crook in order to run down that crook's partner. Do you see the point?"

"I think I do," said Ames, still with some reservation.

"You're not very committal," the other smiled. "Well, there's no reason why you should be just yet. But to return to my own story. In my capacity as assistant bouncer for the Honorable Mr. Frye, I was sent on a prospecting trip up Shinimo to locate the squatter claim of your boyhood comrade and friend, Judson Keith, as a placer claim, only to find that your friend was already possessed of proofs, both practical and technical, that there was no excuse for placer locations there. Your friend made us welcome to everything he had and went off to attend to some work and I had the excruciating pleasure of standing watch outside while the senior member of the firm went through your friend's papers, letters, and correspondence, from which I learned much of his and your own past relationship and present situation. Of the latter, possibly more than you know yourself."

After a pause the speaker resumed. "When you are ready to give me your own confidence in some degree I will tell you more. I have told you enough already to prove that I have nothing in common with these outlaws, and to prove why I know you haven't."

"Do you know anything of the present or probable whereabouts of Keith?" Ames asked with quick concern.

"I do not. Except that I feel confident he has not left the country, or, if he has, that he will most likely return."

"Why do you say that?" Ames queried.

"Because his pride and his natural combativeness will bring him back. He'll try to get even some way. He'll likely reason, and correctly, too, that he is the representative of a class that's entitled to vindication, and that, with his natural combativeness and a pride that will make him go far before admitting failure, will hold him here or bring him back if he has gone away. You know all this, and you reason the same way, and that is why you are here. He will stay

for his pride's sake and the justice of his cause, and your own cause, and the cause of others who have suffered injustice and wrong. You and your friend are both here, and I am here, because eventually right must prevail and justice be vindicated; because someone must make the fight."

They clasped hands very cautiously, but fervently.

"This is a God-send, Mr. Howard," Ames said fervently. "I can't tell you how glad I am to meet you; I'm sure we can help each other and both find plenty to do!"

"There's no doubt we can. I know pretty well your purpose, but not your plans. You know nothing of mine. To be effective, I think we should be free to speak to each other now, that we may work together understandingly while continuing our respective roles as long as seems advisable. I shall continue the name by which they now know me."

"There's no doubt of it," Ames agreed promptly. "In the first place, I have no assumed name here. I am Lewis Ames here as everywhere else. Until your man—Weems, I believe he said his name was—went through Keith's papers they would not necessarily know of my relationship to Keith—now, of course, they do. In that connection would you mind telling me something of the extent of Weems' discoveries and conclusions, that I may be able to meet them or evade them as seems best?"

"Beyond the fact of the disclosure of your relationship, the conclusion is that you and Keith, while very loyal and friendly, are quite deeply and sentimentally interested in the same girl. They presume that fact threatens to mark the point of diversion in your common path; and the plan is to make it, and any other incidents or conditions available, separate you two, not only by destroying your friendship, but by setting you permanently against each other."

"But how do they expect to turn that to their advantage?" Ames asked with manifest concern.

"I am not so sure as to that," Ward admitted, "but taking Weems' reasoning—and I must confess that he's very shrewd in his deductions generally—I say taking his reasoning and supplementing it to some extent with my own, I think they desire to bring about a condition so that you cannot hope to renew your past relations with Keith and his family, while they desire to hold you here permanently and to destroy any unity of purpose you two may have."

"But why such a bid for me?" Ames questioned. "I can't understand that. They take it for granted that I'm a confirmed crook, or a fool."

"Careful, Ames, careful," Ward warned, noticing Ames' agitation. "We're in plain sight, you know, and our conversation must appear to be most casual."

"Sure, I'd forgotten," Ames affirmed.

"In my business I cannot afford to forget," declared the other. "I should say that your conjecture is only partly true. Very likely their plan it to try to make you just enough, but not too much, of a crook. Enough so you will be committed to them, but not so much but that you can, by staying with them, serve their purposes and at the same time give a shell of respectability to their operations and possibly to their personnel."

"Good God!" Ames ejeculated. "Do you know, Mr. Howard, I have been reflecting along that very line and reached the conclusion that just that very thing—a species of respectibility, or what passes for it,—is made the cloak of the worst species of meanness and fraud; the kind that has its roots in selfish motives and its fruits in avarice and unjust profits, shaded over with the deceiving foliage of respectability."

"How true that is. And the worst of it is that there seems no immediate effective remedy. We can only work and hope and pray for the time when society or the public conscience will refuse to accept as respectable whatever is associated with selfishness and unfairness to society, or to any individual."

"Yes," Ames supplemented, "and make respectability really synonymous with honesty, when honesty means the state of—or the manifestation of—honor."

"Exactly," Mr. Ward asserted. "But perhaps we'd better get to a consideration of future plans."

Seeing Ingle approaching, he broke off suddenly and with slightly raised voice, jumped to an entirely irrelevant subject, to hide the real nature of the conversation.

"I really thought," he went on placidly, "that there'd be some mineral showin' in here. Anyhow, we aim to stick around most o' the summer."

"Lew, kin I take Monty tu go tu th' pasture?" Ingle broke in. "I'm gonna bring up some 'bronks' tu work on a while this aft'noon."

"Sure, Jim, go right ahead," Ames assured his friend. As Jim turned and started off, "Say, Jim," he called to Ingle, "be sure to drag that wire gate clear back and out of the way, so that when the band comes through there'll be no danger of any of them getting hurt."

"Sure, Mike," Ingle called back.

"Yes," Ames suggested, returning to the interrupted subject, "we had just decided to get to plans. What do you suggest?"

Ward reflected a moment. "I'll leave it largely to you," he finally declared. "I'm nearly ready to spring my trap. Weems and Frye have been associated for many years. Frye used to be in charge of the Indian Agency at Cedar Springs, and at Fort Hadley. He estimated for and drew large allotments of funds for the Indians, and simply stole himself rich, and even now is selling beef to an equally dishonest successor at an unreasonable and scandalously dishonest profit to both. Weems is the only living witness by whom much of the actual proof can be adduced. I'm quietly working on his cupidity and vanity to cause him to break with Frye, and when he does I know, from his low sense of honor and his almost terrible vindictiveness, that if I am with him when the break comes I'll

make my case. There's plenty of secondary and corroborative evidence when once Weems breaks loose. With me, it's only a waiting game, and not very long to wait either, and you may plan accordingly."

"To tell you the truth," Ames admitted reflectively, "I hardly know what I do want to do. I thought I'd string Frye along to get as much on him as I could, and then decide later what seemed best to do. Since Keith has disappeared I'm awfully perplexed. From what I can learn he was at his place at the time of the raid, but was not personally harmed. The Mexican and an American who looks almost like a Mex and whom they call 'Blackie' or Black Behannan, are away from headquarters a good deal, and if they're told to kill him they'll possibly do it. He's so hot-headed I'm afraid he'll not be cautious." He paused with a visible show of strong emotion. "He—he must not get into trouble. He—*must not—do anything rash.* Mr. Howard, —I must not let him do that."

"Yes, yes," Ward conceded, "but remember," he warned, "we must be careful here. Yes, tell me how I can help you, and we'll make it our first duty to protect your friend."

They stood now very close to each other, Howard facing the house and Ames with his back to it. Ames spoke while they cautiously clasped hands.

"Thank you, friend," Ames said fervently. "Thank you, very much."

"The question now is to find your friend," Ward suggested.

"Or learn of his whereabouts. I want to find him and yet I dare not go from here till I know where he is. Sam, the cook, will help in this way—let me know what he hears. Keith has not gone home, because mail still comes to Kanab for him. Oh, if I could get on to his whereabouts or his plans! Mr. Howard, whatever comes of this, or of me, promise me that you'll stand by him. I owe him and—and his folks so much. Don't you see?"

"Yes, yes, I understand," Ward replied, moved by Ames' intense earnestness. "Yes, you may count on me."

"Thanks *very* much, Mr. Howard," Ames replied feelingly. "That is the main thing. I owe that boy and—and his folks more than I can repay them—and, well *I must do my very best.*"

It appeared that there was nothing definite that either could do immediately but each would work along whatever lines he thought best and their relationship outwardly was to be that of mere chance acquaintances, Mr. Howard to be known as 'Ward', as previously, and to act the part of one new to the country and to ranch life; Ames to show interest in him on that account, each part coming entirely natural to the one assuming it on account of the near accord with actual facts. They would attempt no clandestine meetings, but discuss plans and progress as on this occasion, in the sight but out of hearing of others.

As the two sat talking of ranch life and the problem it presented to the government in its influence upon the settlement of the country, Ward noticed a team driving along the road near the far corner of the north pasture.

"Hello, what's this?" he said. "Looks like some women."

"Someone out for a lark, evidently," Ames suggested. "They're nearing the forks of the road. Maybe they'll turn in here. Yes, that's what they are doing. Some one from the settlements, perhaps."

"What would they be doing out here?" Ward questioned as he saw them coming directly toward the ranch. He knew well its policy of exclusion and unsociableness to settlers.

"Coming to water the horses, perhaps," Ames hazarded. "The women are coming over."

"Girls, just young ladies," Ward stated, lowering his voice as they came closer.

The young ladies came toward them timidly, then

hesitated and made as if to go to the house, but stopped perplexed and turned again toward Ward and Ames.

"Good afternoon, ladies," said Ames, advancing and lifting his hat. "Can I be of service? Was there something?"

"Could you please tell us—" one of them began timidly, then: *"Why, Lew Ames!"* she said with surprised recognition.

"Why, Kate!" Ames replied in joyful astonishment. "Who—where—what in the world brings you here? You little whiffits! I'll bet you've run away." They shook hands and Ames looked for Ward to introduce him.

"Kate did, and I came to bring her back," said Janice Kane, mischievously.

"Now, Lew. You know very well who would run away to come way out here," Miss Keith countered. "Jan, he's so puzzled and astonished," she went laughingly on, "that it is hurting him. Do tell him and get it over with!"

"Yes, for goodness sake," Ames pleaded. "I'm so astonished that I'm stupid."

"It's not fair," Miss Kane insisted. "Kate ought to tell. But, to end the suspense, it's simply this: For three years back, papa has been promising me a trip to California to see Aunt Janice, and she's been coaxing also. Well, at last papa and mama consented, provided I could find proper company. Thereupon, Aunt Janice added another inducement to her importunities and sent money for my fare at about the same time that papa opened his heart and his purse for the same purpose. Having double fare I persuaded Mrs. Keith to let Kate be 'proper company' and—since our tickets provided for two stop-overs, we just decided to take one of them at the station nearest here, staged it to Kanab and hired this man to bring us out here to see if we could run across you and Keith. It's the first opportunity for a lark for two years and we're

making the most of it. Now, does that sound—sound—well, *sound* genuine?"

"Very genuine," Ames admitted. "Entirely feasable, but almost unreasonable. Kate, hold up your right hand and cross your heart. Is this all true?"

"Well, of all things," Janice Kane exclaimed. "Aren't we here to prove it?"

"Excuse him, Jan," put in Miss Keith, "you know he said he was so astonished that he was stupid."

"Looks as though it was the case," the other girl affirmed, teasingly, "or else we're not welcome. He hasn't asked us to sit nor expressed his pleasure at our being here."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," Ames exclaimed by way of admitting the truth of the last accusation. "Now I have proved that astonishment has made me stupid. Come, let me—" and he checked himself suddenly, a look of concern showing in his face. "I—guess I'll have to— Let me see. You know I'm only a hired hand here," he went on confusedly as he thought of the effect of their presence on his purpose and plans. "I wish, I—will have to— The place is not much adapted to accomodating ladies. Miss Price, a niece of the owner, is here temporarily but occupies the tent yonder. I expect I ought to see Mister—"

His mind, it seemed, simply would not work to any conclusion. He had been so overjoyed at suddenly meeting the girls that he had entirely overlooked the predicament their presence had thrown him into and the difficulty of treating these girls as he desired without further exposing himself and his interest in Keith.

"Do you know, Jan," Kate Keith went on teasingly, "he's positively so upset that he doesn't know what to do with us. Let's go on to Judson's."

Judson's! Of course. Why should not Judson Keith's sister and sweetheart visit him—or plan to do so? Ames was in a corner. He must explain, and

a sickening fear came over him that they might doubt his consistency if not his loyalty or his courage.

"Why, Jud—" he began gropingly. "Jud's—of course you don't know that he—isn't there. He—has gone away—now. There's no one there."

The incredulity and astonishment of the two girls nearly overwhelmed him so that he actually feared to go on.

"Why—where—? What—? When did he leave?" Janice finally managed to articulate. Panic was almost mutual with the three of them.

"Oh," Kate Keith almost gasped, "Lew, where has he gone? What has happened?"

Ames observed that Miss Kane was also greatly moved, but she was first to conquer her agitation.

"Lew," she said, almost sternly, "tell us, has something happened to—to—Oh, you must tell m—tell us!"

"Listen, girls," he said, now with some vague plan of action, as he forced himself to meet the situation. "Keith is all right, I'm sure, but," and he motioned them farther away from the house, "I think you understand that some of the big cattle owners in this country object to others coming in and settling up the country; it interferes, they think, with their enjoyment and use of the range. Where Jud located, this company here claimed the ground and tried to get him to move. He refused—as he had the right to do—and—they went and—forced him to go. Where he is now I cannot tell you for sure."

"Lew," Janice Kane again broke in. "Can not tell? Oh, Lew, do you mean—?" and the girl's agitation almost overcame her.

"I mean that they made him leave," he went on with forced calmness, "but I do not know where he went. I have not yet found out. His horses, pack, and riding outfit were left him and he was ordered to leave. In fact, I'm told that they took him and an Indian boy who worked for him to the edge of the range they claim and ordered them to go away and stay away."

"But, Lew," Judson's sister queried, "you must have an idea. Aren't you—can't you do something?"

"I was away when it all happened," he informed her, "and so far have learned nothing definite about his whereabouts, but I had about concluded that he must have gone home. It is evident now that he must be looking for some other location. I have expected to hear from him, but so far not a thing."

"Then why do you remain here? I should think—" and there was sarcasm in Janice Kane's words.

"Because, here is the greatest possibility of harm to him," Ames replied with a calm, level look, "and the most likely place to learn anything of him."

He was not piqued at the girl, but knew he must keep master of the situation.

"Then what had we better do?" Miss Keith appealed, "shall we—?"

"It would be best for you to return home," he advised. "That is—to—to—well, to go on and—have your visit and I will get word to you as soon as possible, when—"

"Oh, we must go home," and Janice Kane's tone pricked Lew Ames to the heart this time for there was mistrust there,—just what he most feared. "Unless—is there anything we can possibly do?"

"Not a thing. If you stay here, and do not want to upset my plans for Jud, I suggest that—that you assume other names and—and—let it be understood that you are only chance acquaintances of mine who met me at Kanab, or—yes, that will do. But do not mention Jud's name nor refer to him at all. You are simply—say, a couple of adventurous school teachers who are endeavoring to see a little of outdoor life. Now, if we may let that be understood, I'll see the proprietor and arrange accommodations until morning, when you had better start back at once."

"As you say," said Miss Kane, but little mollified.

"If you'll excuse me a moment," he said and went

to the cook's window. Sam slid it open, and they conversed a moment.

"Oh, why doesn't he find brother," Kate pleaded, tears starting to her eyes.

"Yes, why? and why is he here?" and Miss Kane's sarcasm was very apparent.

"He said—" Miss Keith began.

"Oh, yes, *he said*—" the other broke in. "He didn't say anything that signified effort—or much of interest."

"Oh, Jan," her companion's words were both inquiry and reproof, "you don't mean—he can't be—"

"Listen, Kate," Miss Kane answered determinedly. "I'm afraid that—that we ought to go at once."

"Why, Jan? Do you know of—of—trouble? I remember Jud said he was afraid Lew was not game and—"

"Yes, and Lew has intimated that Jud was taking too big chances, or unwise chances, or something like that. *Now* what does it look like?"

"Oh, Jan, let's go home!" and again tears were visible, but determination held them back.

"All right, Mr. Ames," they heard the cook say. "I think I understand."

"Then you'll do that, Sam? Thank you, very much," Ames replied.

"He seems friendly enough with them," Miss Keith suggested.

"Yes," from the other, sarcastically, "and they with him."

"I think I can arrange all right," Ames, returning, informed them. "Now, what names—?"

"I'll speak to our driver," Miss Kane said, rather coldly, "and if he will consent we will start back at once."

"Oh, don't do that, Jan," Ames began. "You will—" but she did not wait to hear.

"What's the matter with her, Kate?" Ames asked sadly. "She seems—"

"She thinks you should be with Jud, or be trying to be," the girl answered, "and—so—so—" she did not finish, but ended crying.

"Come, Kate, you mustn't do that. You positively must not," he told her very earnestly. "I cannot—it will—it will spoil my chance to help Jud. Please, please stop at once and—they're going to start back at once," he said suddenly. "She's getting in the wagon: *Kate!"* and his soul was in his look and tone. "Sister—will you—*Kate, you must trust me*—and—and be good to—*her*—and I'll find Jud. I'll try very hard, and send him to you and—and and—Kate, dear," he pleaded fervently, "don't let anything or anyone in all the world make you believe I am not your friend and Jud's and—*her's,* Kate."

She forced a smile through perplexity and tears.

"I will, Lew, I'll trust you," she said.

"And please tell mother that I'll do my very best."

"Oh, Lew, *I know you will."*

"Little sister," he said with unfeigned gratitude, "I'd like to hug and kiss you, but—I mustn't—not here."

"Then can't you come away with us?" she said with a bantering smile.

"I certainly—" he began with suppressed joy, then stopped suddenly. "No, I'd—I'd better not. It would—No, sister, I can't. For a little while longer I must stay right here. It will—I know it will help Jud the most, now. Soon I'll get track of him and go to him. And, Kate dear," with mingled importunity and gratitude, "I—I want—I want you—to—Goodbye, sister, dear, they're ready. And—please believe in me, Kate, dear, and when you see mother, tell her I'm still grateful—and will do the best I can for Judson."

"I know you will, Lew," she said assuringly. "Yes, I'll tell mother, and she'll believe me. Goodbye!"

"Goodbye, little sister!" he said and she was gone. He gazed after her in silence. "I couldn't tell her—anything else," he said. "She—Janice, distrusts me—now. Well, it was all I—could tell her *now."*

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE CLASH

"WELL, Mr. Ames, busy, I see," said Mr. Frye genially as he found Ames in the ranch shop one rainy day.

"Yes, it seems one can always find something to do on a place like this," Ames answered rather seriously, feeling that something was in the air.

"Yes, that's so. One can find plenty if they look," Mr. Frye acquiesced, "but there aren't any too many who look for something to do."

"I much prefer to keep busy, myself," Ames volunteered.

"I've noticed that about you while I've been here this time," his employer asserted, "and before when I was here, and it's about that I want to talk with you before I leave, and I guess here and now is about the best time and place to do it. I want to take you into my confidence a little and discuss some plans for the future. If you've no objection."

"None at all, Mr. Frye," Ames assured him, "only I'd like it understood that the confidence you give is not to bind my conscience, I don't mean by that I will not keep the confidence, but simply that for some reason I may not be able to help you with your plans."

"Oh, sure, I don't mean that you will be in any way obligated—except of course, that when a man lays his business plans before another man for his consideration he does not desire nor expect that they will be gossipped about." The cattle man spoke with just a little bit of impatience at first, but ending confidently.

"I don't believe I'm a—gossip, Mr. Frye," Ames smiled.

"I've observed that you're not, and that's why I'm disposed to talk with you rather confidentially. You've shown energy and good sense in your work, and I believe can succeed in handling this line of business—

with capital." He put a slight pause before and emphasis upon the last words. "There's no use of anyone tackling the cattle business these days without having their range secure or being able to secure and protect it. You can see that, I'm sure."

"It appears that there's little chance for competition in this section," Ames answered non-committally.

"Competition's simply out of the question here," the big man went on. "One outfit can run here and do well. Any attempt at division of the range simply means failure. Some people think I've gone too far in the matter of acquiring the watering places and the land that's the key to the range, but I've simply had to do it."

"Well, I'll admit that that's the point most disturbing to me. If other people want to come in, why can't they? There's no law to prevent them," Ames answered, to draw more of the argument.

"Yes, there is," Mr. Frye came back, confidently. "There's the law of consistency. There's the law of the survival of the fittest. There's the law of successful monopolistic operation against the unsuccessful and ruinous policy of competition."

"But how do these laws weigh against individual liberty and the right of each man to try to succeed by the same means and enterprise by which others have tried and succeeded?" Ames asked, as though merely seeking information.

"Why, the proposition is simply this," the cattleman explained. "Only a small percent of the people are competent to succeed at certain things, and it's service to the incompetent to prevent their useless efforts. I don't know if you are a religious man or not, but you perhaps know that the Bible plainly teaches the two classifications. Christ said once, you know: 'The poor are with ye always.' Meaning, of course, the incompetent. If that weren't so, what would be the need for charity or the opportunity to practice it?"

"You mean that your purpose and object here have

their foundation in philanthropy?" Ames answered as though a truth were dawning.

"Sure, if you choose to look at it that way. If I raise more steers or better steers than some one else, or raise two steers where only one or perhaps where none grew before, it is a sort of philanthropy, a real public service. And when I take others into the business with me and make their investments pay am I not a benefactor? Furthermore, having established a successful business of raising steers, shall I be blamed for protecting that business and those investments? In the matter of preventing the division of this range what do I do? I insure the investments to the stockholders, insure the production of much meat. To eat, myself? Certainly not, but for all who are dependent upon it for subsistence. On the other hand, what would be the result of allowing the range to be divided up? First, failure of the investments for which I am responsible. Second, hardship and suffering for the others who attempted to compete in the business on this range. Third, failure of themselves and of myself and associates in the business. Fourth, loss to the country of the supply of meat food we are producing."

"You think, then," Ames asked innocently, as though possessing no convictions concerning the matter, "that two or ten or one hundred ranchers on this range could not increase, or even maintain, its present production by farming some and feeding stock a part of the time?"

"I know they could not. Positively they could not, so why should they try?"

"Undoubtedly you have given the matter much thought, and besides have the benefit of experience," Ames admitted.

"I certainly have, and what I want now is intelligent application and working out of my plans. In other words, I want a ranch superintendent who appreciates my plans and motives, and who has the brains and the industry to work them out. This man Jackson

will do for a while yet, but in the course of a year I expect to send him back to one of our ranches in Mexico, and will want some one to take his place. And I believe you'll be just the man. What do you say?"

"Of course the proposition is very flattering, but before accepting it I should want to consider it very carefully. In the first place, I'd want to be sure I was adapted to this line of work."

It was coming faster than Ames had expected and he did not want to be dishonest, but neither did he want to commit himself in a way to interfere with either his own or Mr. Ward's plans.

"Oh, I have no doubt of it," Frye replied confidently. "Remember that I said Jackson would stay for some time, until you are ready, and I expect there will be a law passed that will make it easy for us to get preference filings in all the land controlling our watering places, by reason of our existing equities, which means the security of the range. I have the promise of such a law from those who are in position to get it, and we are already working out the details of its administration. You see, therefore, that there will be no further fear of nesters. Infringements of our new law will be simply trespass, and can be dealt with according to law. These matters will be in the hands of our attorneys, and you would not need to worry over them."

"That would be nice, of course," Ames acquiesced, still stalling, "but there was another aspect of the case, as applied to myself, not to the position. I have studied law quite a bit and thought some of taking that up as a profession. That aspiration has been with me to a greater or less extent since my boyhood, and I'm not sure I am ready to abandon it."

"But you'd know by a year from now," Mr. Frye urged. "Besides, you might not need to give it up. In all probability your experience here and your aid in handling our trespass cases would be just the thing to start you right in that line. In fact, I'm quite sure I could put you right in the firm, the one that handles

our legal business. I know I could, in fact. Why, it's just the thing!"

"I should want to be very sure, however, that I really wanted that profession. Along with my ambition to become a lawyer—you'll pardon me for speaking of my youthful ambitions, I hope, Mr. Frye—"

"I don't need to pardon it. It's nothing at all to apologize for. Ambition and the sense and pluck to work to attain one's aspirations constitute the whole difference between what we were speaking of a moment ago—those who are successful and those who are incompetent. By all means speak to me freely of your ambitions. As I just said, ambition, backed by sense and pluck, I bank on every time."

To dissemble, was, to Ames, a matter of regret, and almost made him flinch, but he was now in honor bound to aid Mr. Howard as well as to carry out his own original purpose of assisting Keith. These overtures of Mr. Frye's now seemed to give promise of accomplishing his aim with reference to Keith, for Ames saw in them the possibility of establishing a relationship with Mr. Frye that might enable him to persuade his employer to reinstate or fully settle with Keith, or, on the other hand, put him in position to force a settlement. It was clear to Ames now that the deductions of Mr. Howard, as to Frye's reason for wanting him, were correct. Frye was evidently presuming upon getting him obligated by employment and then corrupting him into using his brain and his good reputation in Frye's own selfish interest. Ames saw the point clearly and his sense of honor threatened open revolt, but he thought it best, in the interest of his understanding with Mr. Howard, to keep "stringing" Frye without committing himself.

"I—don't know just how to approach the matter," he said modestly. "It may seem—foolish to you, but it's quite a serious matter to me. Along with my legal aspiration was the one to be a legislator—a—a politi-

cian, a—I think I mean a statesman, if you'll not laugh at the presumption."

"Laugh at it," Frye repeated, with manifest astonishment. "Most assuredly not. Though I'm delighted to hear it. A politician—a legislator? Laugh at such an aspiration! Not me. I should say not. And there again you prove your very adaptability to my—that is, it's an added reason why you can be of assistance to me and I to you," he said earnestly. "A politician? A statesman and legislator, with legal learning and the insight he'd have into this business," the cattleman now went on almost as though speaking to himself, "would have in a year or two—"

He faced Ames animatedly and with a hand on his shoulder and speaking with great fervor went on: "Young man, you stay with me on this ranch a year or two and you can be a lawyer, a politician, and a legislator. Not only in the state, but in Congress. Yes, you stick with me and follow that line, I swear, in a few—a very few years, you can go to Congress. In these sparsely settled western states a little tact and a little influence and work rightly applied can decide candidates and elections. Oh, I can do what I say, you mark my word."

The big man paused as though certain he had made a proposition that was a winner and Ames was actually chagrined that he had baited the man to the extent he had. He felt that he must back-up someway. At least take an attitude that would intimate to this big bully that he was not bartering his honor.

"Mr. Frye," he said, speaking slowly and with forced placidity, "are you bidding for me, or just arguing?"

The big man was nonplussed but there was animation either quite genuine or quite successfully feigned.

"Why, both," he replied promptly. Then with more deliberation, "I'm showing you your possibilities and—and—"

Ames was more secure now, because plainly the

cattleman had assumed that, as a matter of course, he would capitulate.

"And," Ames repeated, with an effort to suppress the indignation he felt rising,—"and, back of it all, presuming upon my—my credulity or my cupidity. But of course, there's a price, a compensation. What is it?"

Mr. Frye seemed to take the hint, now, that he had been played with, and his perturbation was manifest. There was suppressed anger when he spoke.

"Do you—mean—?" he began, and paused for impressiveness.

Ames' voice was low-pitched, level and cold.

"I asked you about the—price,—the—what am I to—?" he was going to say "what am I to promise," for he felt now that Mr. Frye, having played high cards, would tolerate no compromise. It would be, from this on, either capitulate or "stand the gaff," and Ames had chosen the latter. To his surprise, Frye smiled and seemed relieved.

"Miss Price," he said, assuming that he was quoting Ames, "Oh, yes,—the girl. Oh, sure, there's no doubt about her if—if I say the word—"

Ames had smiled at the misconception of his words but sarcasm had crept into the smile and now the smile had died out and his look of puzzled incredulity, giving way to disgust, seemed to fluster Frye, who having 'tipped his hand' evidently concluded that he might as well go on and play his big trump.

"Only the other day we had a serious talk about—about the business—and about her future and—you. That is, you were mentioned, and I asked her—that is, obtained" (he put a little emphasis on the word) "her consent, not to—that is, not to be indiscreet until, that is, until I got—until I had a talk with you—and—"

Ames cut him off, speaking clear and direct, but with mingled concern and incredulity:

"And—you—say—you obtained—her—promise?—Did you say that?"

There was both menace and inquiry in the last words. Frye did not speak—just gulped and nodded.

"Then," said Ames, with hot precision in the first word and swift rising anger in the others, "*You* LIE!"

He writhed in the force of the effort to restrain himself from doing physical violence to the man before him.

"I didn't say—*that*. Not just *that*," Frye stammered, cowed, agitated, but with such determination as he could muster. "I—"

"But you intimated that she had assented to—to your plan," said Ames, heatedly. "In other words," and there was a tinge of sarcasm now, "that she became your—your pawn!"

Frye looked around before he spoke again. There was Jackson and the sinister Behannan there on the porch, all alert. Weems was nearly behind him, and Ward stood near the far corner of the house. So the big man took courage,—and got angry.

"Mister Ames," he said, "you're getting insulting. I—just—wait," he fumed, and, as though remembering something, shuffled hurriedly into the house to return a few seconds later with the pistol Ames had taken from the Mexican the day after his arrival on the ranch.

"Here, take this again," said Frye savagely. "You've lorded it around here long enough. I withdraw my protection. Hereafter look out for yourself."

He tried to look savage, but Ames looked him so squarely in the eye that he quailed in spite of himself, then sought to cover his flinching by turning with a sneer and grandiose manner that he did not at all feel, and walked away toward the house.

Ames had taken the proffered weapon, not because he wanted it, but to call the bluff which he knew the proffer intended, thereby to make it clear to Mr. Frye that he no longer relied upon him for protection. When the weapon was taken from the Mexican it had four chambers loaded. With deliberate purpose, in order to make the situation clear to all who might observe, Ames held the pistol conspicuously before him

and "broke" it, that is, worked the ejector to show that it was not loaded; that he had ben handed an empty gun and, therefore, a useless weapon.

"Empty, of course," he said, with an ironic smile at the burly bulk of the retreating Mr. Frye, and Weems sniffed audibly.

As Mr. Frye walked away Ames for the first time noticed Miss Price standing, white faced and serious, near the corner of the house. He looked straight at her to see if her face betrayed any sign of her real feeling, but she turned suddenly and went toward her tent. He hoped she had heard either all or none of the words with her uncle. He had an impulse to go to her at once but concluded there was no sign on her part of a desire to meet him, or to say anything to him; so he turned and started for the corral where he had last seen Ward, in the hopes of an apparently casual meeting so he could get and give a suggestion as to future plans. The idea was scarcely formed when he concluded that Ward had the most at stake in the matter and it might be best to let him find the means of their next meeting or communication. Ames decided therefore to go about his preparations very deliberately and if chance or their own efforts did not bring them to him he determined to see Frye, Ward, Miss Price, and Sam, the cook, before he left.

He turned and started for the saddle house when he heard a light tattoo on the kitchen window and glancing that way saw Sam quietly sliding the window. He swerved his course slightly to pass closer to the window and heard the cook say in a low distinct voice "Pick it up," and as he spoke a small object whisked from the window and fell some dozen feet in front of him, so that he would be well out of view of the windows of the house when he stooped to get it. Going to the bunk house he found it unoccupied. Opening the little metal match safe—the object he had picked up at Sam's direction—he took from it a few leaves of cigarette paper on which was written a

message that made his face go almost ashy pale as he read it. He almost reeled as he went forward to the side of his bed where he sat for some minutes with his head in his hands.

"Is he—worth it?" he finally said, and then after a pause: "But—it—isn't just—him, there's—his—there's the—others—all the others—and—"

Resolution came into his face,—almost fierce determination, then perplexity.

"Why hasn't Ward, Mr. Howard—known or said something of this?"

He stood up again after further reflective pause during which perplexity had again given way to determination.

"Yes, there's no other way!" he said with firmness. "It must be done—it must! God help me—and—*him*!"

He arose resolutely, picked up his pistol as though to buckle it on but hesitated, made as if to put it back underneath the bedding, but changed his mind and put it under Weems' bed on the extra bunk and turned and went to the house to see Mr. Frye. His entrance seemed to surprise them. They stopped talking. Frye and Jackson glowered and Blackie leered. Ames had caught a few words from Frye. "Keep guard on top while Behannan and José—," he was saying, but stopped abruptly when he saw who had entered.

It was with an effort that Ames suppressed his agitation at the words but he covered it by the phomptness of his own speech.

"I suppose, Mr. Frye," he said as calmly as he could, "that my usefulness to you is at an end since I am not able to work to the furtherance of your own ends regardless of right or justice, and if I may have my pay now I'll be leaving shortly."

Mr. Frye did not speak but nodded at Jackson who without rising turned around in his seat and reached for a checkbook on a small desk near him. He proceeded to write a check and hand it to Ames, not one of them speaking in the meantime.

"Thank you," said Ames calmly as he took the proffered paper. "I suppose you would deduct the proper amount if there's any claim against me for anything."

It was plain that none of the trio wanted conversation with him, as there was no response to his question for nearly a minute.

"That's all. We're through with you," Jackson finally snapped with an impatient wave of the hand toward the door.

Ames looked him squarely in the eye.

"Perhaps," he said very distinctly, as he turned his gaze on Mr. Frye for the fraction of a minute. Then he turned and went out.

Outside he met Weems who gave him a look that surprised him, it was so different from what he expected. It almost looked like approval.

He caught and saddled his horse very deliberately, hoping all the time for an opportunity to speak with Howard, but he was nowhere in sight. Buckling on his pistol, he reflected for a moment and then he also took the one Frye had returned to him. In his saddlebags he found food, and knew that the cook was still his friend. Leading his horse from the bunk house he walked over to Miss Price's tent. She seemed to have heard him coming, for she met him at the entrance without evident surprise. She was plainly agitated but did not speak.

"I just wanted to tell you," he said with forced calmness and deliberation "that I didn't—that I don't believe either what he said or—or—what he—intimated."

He stood a fraction of a minute puzzled that he could not interpret her look at all. She did not speak nor move.

"That was all," he said.

She leaned on the tent frame an instant, uttered just a syllable which he did not catch, and turned back into the tent.

Ames mounted and rode away.

CHAPTER XL

WHEN FRIENDSHIP PROVES ITSELF

IT was a deep, dark canyon, one of many similar ones that cut the great fanshaped Kaibab plateau as it pushes its ragged southern edge into the great bend where the Colorado River roars its rushing way through the Grand Cañon. One thing that distinguished this particular canyon from most others is the fact that some hardy adventurer had explored its many terraces sufficiently to find a possible way from the top of the plateau down to the river. It is a very devious and dangerous way over sloping sliderocks or along the very brink of cliffs of dizzy distances downward to jagged, boulder-strewn depths hundreds of feet below, and in places, over rock so hard that a horse's shoe would scarcely make a scratch.

Well down into this canyon, where the softer formation has crumbled and eroded to the extent of leaving an opening in the canyon somewhat wider than that prevailing through most of its tortuous length, some twenty or thirty head of footsore and weary cattle were lying in evident relief on the few spots of more or less level patches of wash sand between the rocks and boulders that strew the canyon floor. A little distance away, where the little streamlet spreads over the sodded surface of a miniature meadow, two sweaty saddle horses and a little mule were hungrily cropping the coarse water grass. In a little transept of the main canyon against an over-hanging cliff, Judson Keith was busy at a camp-fire preparing a meal.

That this was no permanent camp was evident from the helter skelter with which the equipment and riding and pack paraphernalia was strewn about. An Indian approached the camp, carrying a bridle and ropes with which he had just lead the hungry horses to their

grateful repast. He picked up a few pieces of driftwood from the ground for fuel as he neared the camp and noted the skimpy character of the fire.

"Here, cut that out," Keith commanded as the Indian started to put some of the wood on the fire.

"What's a-mattah, you no want mo' fiah?" Jim Kwagunt asked.

"No matter," Keith retorted with a manner that showed he had no intention of attempting explanations. Then, after a pause, he asked the Indian if he had found good grass for the horses. Kwagunt assured him he had.

"Heep brack gramma," he said, "and some beeg watah grass."

"Cattle quiet?" was Keith's next query.

"Yaas, 'bout all lay down. Heap ti'ed."

"Sore-footed, I guess," Keith suggested.

"Yaas," said Kwagunt with a dubious shake of his head as he looked up the mountain. "One helluva trail."

"Coming down the slides makes 'em sore," Keith explained.

"How many cattle you gonna git?" the Indian asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe one more bunch, maybe no more. We'll put this herd across the river and if nothing happens and Bergson divies up handsome I think I'll be square. I've about got even with old Frye for beating me out of my ranch, and"—hesitatingly—"besides—"

"And 'sides, mebbe so you gettin' heap scairt," Kwagunt hazarded, recalling the inhibition against more fire.

Keith was piqued at the Indian's words. "No, Jim," he said. "At least I'm not afraid of anyone else. It's myself. Me not like Bergson and his gang. They steal for a living because they're mean. Old Frye and his men steal my place and burn my things, I only take Bar-T cattle to pay. Maybe so quit now. Tomorrow meet Bergson at river; swim cattle over, pay you off,

and pull out. If I do that will you be good Indian and work and not help Bergson steal cattle?"

The last words, spoken with serious earnestness, showed Keith's own dissatisfaction with his course.

"If you keep on stealing cattle putty soon white men ketch you," he went on. "Maybe so shoot you, maybe so lock you up in prison so you putty soon die. You'd rather be good than die in big prison, wouldn't you, Jim?"

Keith paused between the sentences to note the effect on the Indian.

"If you go back into southern Utah you can get nice squaw and work for white folks and no more be 'fraid white man shoot you or put you in big prison to die."

The Indian seemed to be impressed.

"Keith," he said, soberly, "you gotta nice squaw? A—a—whut—ye—call 'em? —Sweetheart?"

Keith drew a photograph and letter from his pocket and showed them to Jim without speaking.

The Indian looked at the picture solemnly. "Whoo-ee!" he exclaimed. Then he looked at Keith while speaking and back again to the picture.

"Whut's a mattah you no be good all a time?" he asked. The question pricked Keith's already sore conscience.

"Me not so bad. You know Bar-T steal my ranch. Me only take Bar-T cattle to pay. Me quit now. No more take 'em cattle. Tomorrow me swim these across river. Bergson pay me, me pay you, then we be good men all a time. Eh?" taking the picture and letter and returning them to his pocket.

"Uh-huh," said the Indian seriously.

They proceeded with the meal as they talked, and had begun to gather up the dishes when Lewis Ames suddenly stepped around the point of rocks with drawn revolver in each hand, covering both.

"Hands up!" he commanded.

Keith and the Indian, considerably startled and

dropping dishes, complied promptly, whereupon Ames began putting away his revolvers.

"That will do, gentlemen," he said, looking at the dishes and remnants of the meal. "Am I late for—"

Keith, suddenly drawing his pistol, covered Ames.

"Yes," he said sarcastically, "you are a little late, Lew Ames. Too late to be welcome—or funny! Jim," he added, addressing the Indian, "take his irons." The Indian hesitated, then started reluctantly toward Ames.

"Don't bother, Jimmy boy," said Ames with a smile, "they're neither of them loaded, so have no fear. As our old friend Mark Anthony might have said, but didn't, 'I came to praise Ceasar, not to bury him.' "

While speaking Ames removed his pistol belt and holsters with pistols still in them and deposited them on a boulder near him. During this process Keith made as if to lower his gun, but suddenly raised it again, and repeated this several times, finally deciding to keep Ames covered.

"Come, Jud, old friend," said Ames, with earnestness, "put away the artillery. It was to talk and not to do theatrical stunts that I dropped in on you. Laying all facetiousness aside, let me explain that my little bit of acting was simply for the purpose of impressing you with the seriousness of your situation—that is, in connection with what I came to tell you."

To Ames' surprise Keith showed no disposition to believe him.

"Lew, you may think you are very impressive and you may feign a friendly purpose in your dogging me as you have," he said sarcastically, "but I have come to know your treachery and to understand your purpose in it, and if you expect your little ruse will work you have your reckoning to do over again. I know what you want, you traitor and coward! You want me to disarm so your equally cowardly friends, old Frye's hirelings, can come and take me without danger to themselves or you. Such a plan is entirely in keeping with your conduct in the past. Too big a coward to

fight for your rights you turn against your sworn childhood friend and the comrade of your youth and 'side in' with his persecutors to work his ruin. Not content with my financial ruin, you try to rob me of what is dearer still, my good name and the love of the sweetest, purest girl God ever made. Only the wish to let you know that I am fully aware of your perfidy —to rob you of the hypocritical satisfaction of thinking that I think you my friend, prevents me from shooting you dead in your tracks, you—you—"

"No, Jud, that is not the reason at all," Ames broke in with pained surprise. "It is that you are not a murderer. It is that behind your desperation, independent of your anger and your consequent misjudgement of me, deep down in your heart of hearts is the flickering but undying spark of friendship you hold for me. It is that the memories of a patient and loving mother's teachings have made you something better than an assassin; it is that the love of that 'sweetest, purest girl God ever made' rises in power triumphant over your pride, your anger, and your desperation and stays your hand and pleads with you to be your true and better self, that that same love may not have been in vain nor be dishonored by being wasted upon a low, bad man who, in weakness, or in rash misguided strength, could make love so sacred and so sweet have so sad an end. Oh, Jud—!"

"Stop, Lew!" fiercely commanded Keith, not at all moved by Ames' earnestness. "Till this moment I did not know how eloquent hypocrisy could be; how shameless and to what low depths would treachery descend to work its deadly will by conjuring up and dabbling in the sweetest and most sacred things that touch the course and sum of human life and love. I'll hear no more! I may have made mistakes and been unwise in what I have done, but never yet have I, nor will I, make such wicked use of things so pure and sacred as to make them tools of treachery and hate, disguises for false friendship's foul and cursed work!

You prate of honor, yet you've helped to force dishonor on me! You speak of the memories of a mother's teachings, and to you I charge the conduct that has made those teachings fail of their sweet purpose and intent! You even dare mention sweet and sacred love when, in the guise of friendship, you sought your best to steal that love from me. Or, even worse, sought to kill it with your sneaking, treacherous innuendos, and steal the treasure you could not fairly win."

Heated as were the words and the manner of his old friend and comrade, Ames was not angry nor resentful. Instead, they only served to show to him how deep and awful had been the sufferings of his friend at the presumed treachery.

"Jud, old boy, how much you wrong me," he said sorrowfully. "And, what's worse than that for you, how much you wrong yourself. I can forgive the wrong you do to me, because, in what I've seen and in what you say, I think I see what's helped, at least, to make you do and feel as you do. You say you'll not hear me, but I think you will. I will not think you base enough to hold such feelings against me without opportunity for explanation and, when I'm unarmed and deliberately have placed myself in your power, I know that for the sake of our associations of the past you'll let me tell you, and do for you, the things by which I'll prove again that we are still and always will be, fast friends and comrades as we've been before. At no small risk I've come to help you today, and I want you to prove to me and through me—to—*her*—and to all the world that you're a better man than even you have thought yourself. I say for old times' sake; to prove it to your mother to whom I owe so much and who has for so many years been so like a mother to me; to prove it, Jud—to another,—whose love I know you hold and which I'd die before I would seek by unfair means to turn aside or undermine."

He went on when he could control his feelings sufficiently.

"Jud, I'd hoped that I could do what I intended—without bringing her into the matter at all—but, to be honest with you, I'll admit that while I do protest my friendship and my love for you and yours, yet it is also for her sake that I want to help you be your really good and better self. That—I was fond of her too, I do not deny, and, while you may blame me because you think I've been unfair to you I know you'll not blame because I admired *her.* You were my brother; my more than friend, and I'll admit I may have given you reason to suspect that I had been more than merely friendly toward her. You knew I sent her letters and that I received some in return. I'll not deny that and, Jud, old friend, you can not find it in your good heart to blame me much for that. But if I made you jealous and you have judged me wrongly on that account, I only ask that you'll let me help you to go back to her, your true and better self to get the proof that I have never been unfair to you or her."

Even by this heartfelt plea Keith was only partially mollified. He seemed to concede present friendliness of purpose but was not ready to forgive the past.

"I see! You're telling me she's turned you down," Keith said with clear lack of conviction, "and, having failed to shake her love for me you want to play the martyr and rob our love of half its worth by claiming that you made possible its fruition. Your game's a cunning one, I must admit. Having done your best—or worst—to win, and, losing out, you want to pose as magnanimous and claim to give me what never was yours to give!"

"No, Jud, it isn't that," protested Ames, encouraged by the fact that Keith had reached a stage where he would argue, "I must maintain you wrong us both in that assertion, and you'll get the proof when reason rules your mind and you listen to your friend and to your own better judgment. I've admitted that I liked her—and now admit that she's told me she loves—someone else—a boyhood friend of mine whom I also

love, but who has met misfortune and been sorely wronged; who, fighting to maintain himself, let angry passion sway his will and warp his reason, blunt his honor and almost make him unworthy of his name and of the most priceless gift sweet womanhood bestows."

"Lew, the fact that you accuse me of my wrongs proves that you have spied on me. Now have you come to taunt me with my wrong? To kill my self-respect in hopes that I'll go away and leave you the prize you couldn't win fairly? I say, is that your game?"

"Having asked the question, Jud, will you let me answer it and prove that what I say is true? Listen. When you wanted me to join you in making a ranch on Shinimo I knew the Bar-T Company would never let us see it through; that Frye would never stop at anything to oust us out; and that to fight him was worse than useless under present conditions. I knew that the officials of the land office are virtually his appointees, and even if that wasn't so that he could find the means of proving what he wanted to. For that reason I wouldn't waste my work and my money there, but went over the mountain and bought a place with a good title and no big company to persecute me and cheat me out of it. The range isn't so good, I know, but it's free, and I can make it do. Old Dunning, by hiring a little help, has put it in good shape and now we both know very well that what I did was best."

"But why did you work against me in my efforts?" Keith asked, in a way that showed a half-conviction already. "And how do you know that but for your joining with Frye I might have got my place on Shinimo?"

"I didn't work against you, Jud. When you were determined to go ahead I knew the fight was on, and while not aiding him at all, I purposely kept close to Frye and his foreman, Jackson, and kept away from you, in the hope that I could get the proof of their

crookedness and thereby find some way to help you. I studied Frye's method and his aims and I knew that he would fake a scrip filing on your place or take some other means to assert claim to it, to do which I knew he had to swear the ground was not occupied, so I made an affidavit and sent it by registered mail to the land office, and also had Dunning and Beal come clear over the mountain to see your place so they could swear that it was not vacant, and also that Frye had not surveyed nor posted notices on the place as the law requires. It did no good, but harmed us both. It made you think I was working against you, and that still further discouraged you. Made you distrust me, and when Jackson and his hirelings drove you off and destroyed all your hard work and your high hopes, led you to try to convince yourself that it was right to take your pay from Frye's property when his men destroyed your place and drove you away."

"Perhaps you've just as nice a story in explanation of your writing to mother, and don't omit explanation of the reference to the fact that I was 'apt to be in some trouble,' and that you 'hoped I wouldn't do anything rash!' Perhaps you'll also tell your true feelings and intentions when you got your turn-down from Janice Kane in spite of your dirty innuendos about me and your setting yourself up as a combination of a little tin god and cupid and an angel."

Ames chose to ignore the sarcasm of tone and manner, but could not help resenting the imputation of self assumed superiority, and showed the resentment in his words.

"So far as my feelings were and are concerned is strictly my own affair, and the man doesn't walk on earth who can claim the right to question me concerning them! For a laudable and friendly purpose I've already disclosed more of them than I'd ever thought I would. As for my actions, I am willing to answer for them to anyone at any time. I wrote to her because I felt inclined to do so, but only after twice

asking you as to your sentiments and intentions respecting her. If your unreasoning bias has left you sense enough to remember what your answers were, and honor enough to admit them, that, added to the fact that I wanted to write to her, is sufficient on that point. The first time I spoke to you, you denied any intention of pressing your suit and seemed to me entirely sincere in what you said. The last time I spoke of the matter to you, you were angry and flatly told me not to mention the matter again, and until today I have respected your wish. As to reference to you and my observations as to your conduct, I leave it to your own better judgment to declare if there was not grounds for my misgivings, and, in answering your own question on that point, remember that I did not write until I had good grounds to think you had not only stopped writing to her, but that your conduct seemed to prove that your suit had failed."

Keith was honest enough to admit to himself the truth of this last assertion, and thereby divested himself of any further grounds for criticism on that score. He knew further that most of his conclusions as to Ames' motives and conduct grew out of, or found their main support in, the assumption that if Ames would try to get his girl he would do all the rest. Keith was now able to recognize that much of what he had taken as fact was, after all, only assumption.

"I almost wish I could believe you, Lew. It's simply Hell not to have one real, true friend. I—I—"

Walking up to Keith, Ames took the revolver from his hand and placed it in its holster, looking him squarely in the eye as he spoke.

"Jud, I am your friend, real and true," he said with feeling, "and for your own sake, for the sake of boyhood's happy memories, you must let me prove it, and prove that you are still my friend by trusting me and believing what I say. You're in much trouble, and I want to see you safe and free to prove again your manhood and your own true worth. Listen, Jud: two

days ago Sam, the ranch cook, heard that red whiskered prospector, who by the way is a secret detective of Frye's, tell Frye that Bergson's signal fires were seen across the river, and that Bergson was suspected, if not actually known to be, the receiver of cattle stolen on this side of the river. The detective also said that cattle had gone over the rimrock into Nankoweap Canyon during the last week. Last night Jackson told Black Behannan and the Mexican to go down the canyon and 'get' the man on sight that they found with the cattle. He told them not to be particular, because burials cost less than trials, and it would be easy to prove either an alibi or a fight. He said it was thought there was only one man working on this side. They were to pack and leave headquarters at sunrise today, and by tonight will camp somewheres in this canyon if they find where your trail comes off. By tomorrow noon at the outside they can reach the river, by which time I want you to be over the mountain and out of reach of all suspicion. By this time their trap at the river has been sprung and Bergson and his gang are killed or under arrest. Jackson and most of the ranch hands are following the rimrock around to guard every place where a horse could possibly get in or out."

"My God! Lew," Keith exclaimed as the seriousness of his predicament became manifest to him, "this is awful! Five minutes before you showed up Jim and I shook hands on a solemn oath to cut out this work and be square. I'd got my pay for what old Frye had stolen from me, and was going out to see Vance and get that option on the Rodman place on Wigwam and live white and square. We—I—My God! Lew, isn't there some way out of this? It'll kill mother if I'm arrested, and think of—of—her—Lew,—of Janice!"

"I thought of that—Jud, a thousand times," Ames said with decision, "and if you do exactly as I tell you and don't stop to quibble, and keep your nerve, you can get out of this. They don't know you're in the

country. Last summer while skirting the rimrock, on a certain Point, I found a place where a spruce tree stood at the foot of the ledge in the head of a box canyon near a little seep. The top of the tree came within thirty feet of the top of the ledge. Last week when Bates brought my mail to Bar-T headquarters I could tell from my letters plain enough that you were not at home. That worried me. Bates left Kanab two days ago and said you had never come there. Joe Erdley told me that last Monday noon an outfit had passed through Moqui Park and lost a note book, which he showed me. I knew it at a glance as yours, but claimed it as my own. Last night when Sam tipped off that detective's report and Frye and Jackson's plans and what other things he knew, I made excuses and got my horse and started off toward home, then turned and rode directly to find my spruce and get to you before it was too late. I couldn't get down through the ledges in the night, so stayed on top till daylight, picketed my horse, let my saddle down the cliff, fastened a rope to a bush and let myself down into the spruce that stood against the ledge below. I climbed back up again to prove it could be done, then came down again, picked up my saddle and brought it down with me, so you must take yours with you."

"And aren't you going back on top, Lew?" Keith asked with surprise.

"Not now, Jud, it's impossible," Ames informed him. "I'll be all right. If all of us try to go they'll track us up and spoil the whole thing."

As Ames spoke Keith stood as if in a stupor. Ames put some food in a small sack which he had picked up and tied it to Keith's pistol belt.

"I'll hide the Indian's saddle in the rocks," he continued, "and he can help you take yours up the hill. I've got mine here, and Quagunt won't need his because he'll have to sneak along the sand shelf to White Creek and work his way to Bruce's camp and tell them

his horse fell off the ledge—or something, so they won't suspicion him. You savy, Jim?"

"Uh-huh," the Indian answered promptly, evidencing that he, too, understood the seriousness of the situation and was willing to rely upon Ames' suggestions now that they seemed to include consideration of his welfare. "You damn good fellah," he volunteered. "Me no tell. Me no likem big prison. Me all the time good Injun now."

"That's right, Quagunt," Ames replied gratefully, shaking the Indian's hand and patting him on the shoulder. "You be good Indian. Help Keith up to the spruce at the foot of the rimrock, then you," motioning with his hands, "keep below big ledge and tomorrow night find Bruce's camp down White Creek near the river and tell 'em you lose 'em horse on ledge—go into river. Heap big splash. No seen 'em any more."

"Uh-huh," the Indian acquiesced, anxious to show that he saw the need and the method of the strategy. "Me get all wet in the ribber, un tell 'em me lose 'em hoss on other side ribber. Me swim ovah."

"That's the stuff, Quagunt," Ames encouraged him. "You heap smart Indian. But," and he spoke with earnestness, "you help Keith get up the mountain. And when you get to Kaibab or to Shivitt's Indian Farm, you no tell um lies. You all the time be good Indian. No more gamble, no more drinkum whiskey, no stealum horses, no more go with—with men who do bad things. Maybe so pretty soon work for Dunning on my ranch and have nice squaw and fine hosses like Monty."

"Uh-huh. Me savey, heap wino. Nuny navish pasharini." The Indian's earnestness was manifest in the fact that he did not notice that his assertion of understanding and his pledge of secrecy were stated in Piute.

"Come, then, let's take the Indian's sacred vow of friendship," said Ames, and holding hands they both touched the embers of the camp fire, a ceremonial token, that by the power from which fire comes, they

pledged their lasting friendship and their honor, which pledge should not be broken even by the tortures of fire.

"Oui," said the Indian in solemn affirmation.

"Come, fellows," said Ames, picking up Keith's saddle and handing it to the Indian, "it's time for you to be going. You must be at the rimrock before dark so you can have tonight to get out of the Bar-T country. As soon as you turn the point keep on the bare rock as much as possible. Follow the gulch through the main walls of ledges, then follow the shale shelf on your right to where the little trickle of water comes off the upper ledge. Two hundred yards past this you can climb the ledge to the next terrace. Once on top of this, the bottom of the side gulch is solid rock. Follow it clear up to the base of the rimrock. Make it before dark, and to the left, close against the ledge you can see the big spruce. Tie your saddle to you and climb the tree as far as you can and you'll find my rope hanging from above. I used the lash rope, not the lariat, as it is larger and softer. You, Jud, tie the rope to your saddle horn so you can pull the saddle up when you are on top. On top, keep on the bare rock to where the fallen tree touches the rim. Walk on the tree as far as you can, then walk on the dead pine needles, which are thick, and your track will not show if you're careful. Two hundred yards up the draw just behind the aspen thicket you'll find Monty. He's good for seventy miles before daylight. You won't need to spare him. Tell him it's for—for," he had to pause for control of himself—"tell him its for *me;* that I owed it to you and that he's taking you back to your—to your manhood. Keep out of roads and trails until you hit the other edge of the mountain, and ride as much as possible on the pine needles while in the forest. Once off the mountain you'll be out of the zone of suspicion."

Keith seemed to be pondering something, but the Indian was for moving at once.

"Un me no go on rimrock," he declared, motioning to show how he would sneak under the rimrock. "All way to White Canyon; then Boose's camp—all safe."

"That's it, Jim, that's fine," Ames assured him.

"Lew," said Keith, solemnly, "how do you suppose I can do this thing? Not only leave you in the trap I set for myself, but leave you to take a stain on your name and bear the odium of a sin you did not,—that you could not have committed, and all this in the face of the treatment I have given you? Oh, Lew! I—I—"

"Come, old boy," Ames declared assuringly, "your treatment of me has not hurt me any. You were not yourself then. Now you are, and my friend as of old, and I esteem it a privilege well worth the price to prove that I—am your true friend." Then to the Indian he said: "You'd better go on, Jim. You take the saddle and Keith will come soon."

"Adios," Jim said very solemnly.

"Adios, Jim," said Ames. "Remember now."

"Uh-huh. Me 'member."

"Lew," Keith queried again, "what is your plan for yourself?"

"Haven't I proved quite resourceful, old boy?" and Ames forced a smile. "You leave it to me, and I'll—and everything will be all right. But you must be hiking, Jud, it's some climb to the rim and it's getting late."

"But, Lew, don't stay here. Jim tells me that Mexican has had it in for you since you cuffed him for beating a broncho, and that old black devil who came to my place on Shinimo wouldn't stop at anything. Do come out, Lew!"

"No, Jud," said Ames decisively. "If we all go they will track us and we'll get caught—or at least suspicioned. I'll stay and hold the goal. I can work down to the river and surrender to the sheriff's men if I think best. I'll keep them busy here as long as there's need and then—"

"But, Lew," began Keith, thoroughly excited at the ghastly possibilities.

"Oh, tut—tut—Jud," and Ames smiled reassuringly.

"But, Lew!" Keith pleaded, "come on out! Let's take the chance together."

"No, Jud, I can't do it," and Ames sat down on a boulder to emphasise his decision. "It wouldn't be best—"

"Then, *shot,* or *hung,"* exclaimed Keith, throwing off his hat and sitting down as he spoke with great emphasis, *"I stay too!"*

"Jud!" Ames sprang up excitedly. "You can't! Man! think whose name is linked with yours! For *her* sake you *must* go! and quickly, for she's not in love with a thief! Get out of here and prove it! There's no other way. I tell you there's no other way!" Ames cried determinedly as he again handed Keith his hat and bag of provisions which he had thrown down.

"But, Lew!" Keith persisted, "Black Behannan and that devil, José—?"

"To hell with Behannan and the Mexican devil," exclaimed Ames with sarcastic derision, "I'm not worried about them. And," here he smiled a little teasingly, "—didn't I cover you and Kuagunt pretty easily? But come, Jud," he said earnestly again, "you must go at once. Your part is to get out of here. Leave the rest to me. You must go, Jud—now. There's positively no other way," and Ames began gently pushing Keith along as he spoke.

"Some time write to Dunning to send you the papers in my desk at the ranch that are addressed to you. And if—and if—you don't see me again—" Keith looked startled, "—for quite a while," and again Ames smiled, "promise me that you'll keep our secret, *absolutely.* Be good to everybody—and to—Monty up there waiting for you to take you over that mountain tonight."

"But, Lew," Keith urged with grave concern, "get out of this someway. Do the best you can."

"Yes," Ames assured him earnestly, "I promise you I will do the best I can," and gently but persistently he continued to push Keith along around the point of the cliff that hid the camp. "You'll have to hustle to make the rimrock by dark."

As he spoke the two disappeared around the point of the cliff. Ames returned alone a moment later, speaking as he paused in contemplation of the full measure of the promise given.

"Yes," he said again, as though searching the expression for the full meaning of the words, *"I'll do the best I can!"*

CHAPTER XLI

A MAN'S GETHSEMANE

AMES stood for some time in deep thought. Every man, he was thinking, ought as a matter of course to do his best, but here again was the oft recurring question: What is the best one can do? Under any circumstances it implied thought, it implied action when reason, perhaps aided by inspiration, has decided the course. When Ames had received the word from his good friend the cook that the friend to whom he owed and had pledged so much was evidently trapped with the clear proof of his guilt he had reasoned his course to the point of getting Keith out of the trap but not farther. There had been in his mind several vague fragments or notions of what he might attempt but he had dismissed them all to address his whole powers to the problem of his chief obligation, duty to his good friends and benefactors. It was more than a matter of saving a man's life. It was a matter of saving a friend's character—a family's good name. Ames knew that Judson Keith was not a thief at heart, nor by deliberate desire or intent. It had simply been a case of combat—of resistance pushing calm reason off the throne temporarily while the passion of anger made a slave of the will. It appeared to Ames now that Mr. Frye's effort to get him definitely committed to his interests before springing the trap on Keith had been deliberate, so that, with Ames engaged and Keith destroyed or proven a thief, there would be no question of their again jointly planning any encroachment on the range. If the two of them were stopped it would mean virtually the end of trouble of that character. To buy or to destroy—or, to buy *and* destroy has always been a favorite method with the unscrupulous. As between these two friends Ames, from Mr. Frye's aspect of the case, had been selected for the sheep;

his friend Keith for the goat. The trouble with the scheme had been that the sheep had refused the inviting pasture in which to be fattened for the later slaughter of his character. The diabolical nature of the whole scheme came before Ames like a vision. Place, prestige, influence—as such were measured in this phase or mode of life—money, in the shape of interest in the ill-gotten profits, the shameful effort at the barter of a girl's hand, if not of her heart,—all these Ames saw in all their garish alignment as the crude and unscrupulous Mr. Frye had placed them one by one temptingly before the man he would buy. Ames had not been so dull as to see no advantage in some of these things, but there was a modicum of satisfaction to him that there had been virtually no enticement in them; that in none of them had he seen the price of friendship betrayed, of duty denied, or of honor tainted. That their brazen proffer had rather nauseated than attracted him was in a way a surprise to him and made him feel that in his previous and sometimes perplexing ponderings of the course of duty there had been something sustaining, something that made easier the present stand. It almost amused him now, the ease with which he could stand aside from himself and make impersonal appraisement of failures and successes; measure them by their effect for or against soul-growth. His mind went back to the new and simple philosophy he had heard at Hudman's funeral; when the calm, matter-of-fact farmer man had so vividly set forth the doctrine that religion was nothing more nor less than life and that life was not measured by its earthly span, but that the hereafter was conditioned by things done and planned while we sojourned here in mortal guise. He recalled the declaration concerning the Master's "forty days" wrestling with those chief temptations, which before and ever since have been the measure of man's worth or proof of growth. Then "the fallen one" unwittingly had shown the Christ that his most cunning weapons, devised to curse

the course of human life and sear the souls of mortal men, were all appeals to selfishness and pride and pomp and greed and fleshly appetites, there and then to prove that Satan is no match for him who conquers self. Yes, quite clearly now, Ames could look back and in the philosophic resurvey of life see that out of some type or phase of selfishness come all the grossest, and at the same time the most subtle, sins that taint men's characters and mar life's course. Also, that giving self and service to another, whether friend or foe, or serving in some righteous cause, perhaps unpopular or much misunderstood, was both the making and the proving of the type of soul Christ's creed had seemed to contemplate as worthiest salvation's high estate. Then came the thought: *How had he served?* He had been the beneficiary of all the kindly offices, including both care and instruction, that parental love bestows and by those who served unselfishly and without the compensation parental love finds in service given to its own. *How had he repaid?* His conscience acquitted him of the sin of ingratitude, but unless this effort to save Keith was effective there would be no proof of what he felt, and if he failed in this how could his friends and benefactors ever know that he had intended to repay the kindnesses which they had shown to him? Was the intent, the desire to do good, sufficient? The philosopher, he of the shovel and the muddy boots, had said the intentions must be proved by acts. He had even asserted that everlasting punishment was the perpetual sense of failure to act when one should have done so and eternal damnation the ever accusing knowledge that I am, in fact, *here today* when I might have been *there,* at that higher station or state of soul development, had I acted when I should. Ames found no comfort in the recollection of the words of that other sage, to the effect that there were many in hell who had not intended to be there—in fact, who *had intended* to be elsewhere. Clearly, salvation, the satisfaction with

one's state, to say nothing of that more desirable thing, *exaltation,* is more than intent or hope. It is actual attainment; it is to conform, reform, transform. The first and last by faith, repentance and effort, the other by that final "renewal" that is "by grace alone." Had he attained,—conformed—reformed? His perplexity was due to the peculiar fact that much of the highest service is nearly, if not actually, sub-conscious service; that rendered when self is lost in service. Up there above the rimrock there was—had been—prestige, place, power—yes, and love,—and all these Lew Ames desired and had forgone, forsaken, scorned, without a moment's thought that it was service; just the thought that right and duty did not lie in that direction. Down here, under the rimrock was duty, service. Down here in the hidden depth of one of earth's dark defiles was a friend in need; a life in peril, a name threatened with stigma, a love about to be robbed of the possibility of fruition. Would the friend be served? the love bear fruit? Failure of either one meant the forfeiture of all. Would he fail? Had he acted rightly? or in time? or sufficiently? If not,—what? And in the torture of that thought Ames had a new revelation; a new thought; an old expression in a new light. *Gethsemane and not Golgotha had seen the chief agony of a world's Redeemer approaching supreme sacrifice. There* in the darkness had come (and passed) the great trial bound up in the great question as to whether He had succeeded. People ignoring or not understanding, officialdom stultifying itself, a mob gathering bent on His destruction, a traitor purchased, a world indifferent, friends asleep. Had the plan failed? Was the age unpropitious? He had stood for that plan in the Great Council. Its adoption had rent asunder the Divine family, alienated a "son of the morning," started strife in heaven, and sent sin to earth. The supreme test was at hand. The doctrine had been proclaimed—the philosophy outlined. Yes, the moment of supreme test was at hand and His closest friends, though repeatedly

asked to watch—slept instead. To make the test complete, the proof genuine, and the appeal to men reasonable, the divine element was subdued; He faced the ordeal as a mortal being, thereby to sound the very depths of self-sacrifice for principle and for friends. Had He failed? How long must He be tortured with the possibility? "Father, if it be Thy will, let this cup pass!" Ah, "if it be *Thy will*"—submission, self-surrender, loyalty to the last. Did they fail? Do they ever fail? When the very philosophy of life, the very plan of salvation, the very way to Eternal Life, is through the medium of self-sacrifice, *could they fail?*

Out of this vision Lewis Ames walked forth from his Gethsemane to face his Golgotha, a man renewed, ready to give self for right and for friends. The sting of the assassin's bullet, the fang of the coyote, the rending flesh, the bleaching bones,—he saw them all,—nor winced nor wavered, *for the way had been traveled before.* That way led "The Way of Life," that way lay the promise: "He that giveth his life shall find it again." That way had gone the "Man of Sorrows" to be "Lord of Lords."

CHAPTER XLII

THE PROBLEM ANEW

FROM the time he had received the message from the cook which, in connection with what he had obtained from other sourses, made him sure as to Keith's predicament and of Frye's plans, (much of which the cook had obtained by the simple expedient of hanging a funnel over a hole in the partition between his own room and that occupied by the conspirators) Ames had been considering the problem before him and the most feasible means of its solution. To be worth while, the rescue must be complete. There were the cattle and other evidences of guilt, as it would be termed by the measure of the law. How could he remove, palliate, or explain that? Over and over he had pondered this question. Expedient after expedient he had devised only to discard each because it held out only a doubtful possibility of success. To save the life of his friend was feasible—comparatively easy—but to remove the stain, to prevent what might be considered worse than death, to rehabilitate a character, to save suffering and sorrow,—how was he to accomplish that? He had arrived at no definite conclusion because the pressing need was to get Keith out of the trap. This done, he could go on with his planning.

Could he assume responsibility for what Keith had done? There was the key. He must take upon himself responsibility for what Keith had done. No explanation would be effective. Unless he could do that, all was in vain. With Keith once captured the evidence would be overwhelmingly against him and it would mean either his summary execution without reference to forms of law or of legal proceedings, or his trial and conviction. In either event it meant disgrace and sorrow for a mother, for a sweetheart, for a brother and sisters.

"It's the only way," he repeated audibly many times, and "the only way" was practicable and feasible. Blackie and the Mexican would be put forth to make the capture, or—do the *other.* Frye had only intimated, but Jackson had given explicit orders as to "the *other.*"

"It would be easy to prove either an alibi or a fight," Jackson had said, and that was a fact, and "burials cost less than trials." Yes, much less, when it was only a matter of some small gully and the caving off of a little of the bank. *It was much cheaper than a trial*—and, under the present circumstances, just as safe. Blackie and the Mexican would not stop long to consider the possibility of mistaken identity. José had not forgotten his quick chastisement and humiliation, and Behannan, lacking the courage for an open combat, would readily welcome the semblance of an excuse for a shot from ambush as a means of satisfying his rankling grudge.

Since his special favor with Frye, Ames had not been assigned regular service, but had been left largely, almost entirely, to his own devices, to set himself such tasks as his industry and ingenuity dictated. As a result of this condition he had been some of the time at the ranch alone and at other times away when the others were at the ranch. On a few occasions he had ridden to distant parts of the range alone—once to visit Keith's place after his forcible ejection. This fact would give color to the assumption that he at least had had opportunity to drive cattle down below the rimrock and thereby subject him to suspicion. Furthermore, all the direct evidence would point to him, and the fact that he would, without doubt, be killed outright without any effort to capture him and turn him over to the sheriff's posse would likely satisfy Mr. Frye's desire for vengeance and riddance of him and probably so disconcert him that he would be disposed to "hush up" the affair as soon as possible. This last probability, Ames felt, would be enhanced

by the fact of his having been put out of the way by men with deep-seated personal hatred of him and consequently whose conduct in destroying him would not very well stand investigation. All in all, the situation was such as to fasten on Ames all the earmarks of guilt, and to lessen the likelihood of any attempt to establish the guilt of another. To surrender to the sheriff or even to permit capture would demand false admissions and explanations that might lead to further investigation and to further suspicion.

"It's the only way," Ames repeated again with finality, and proceeded to act upon that conclusion—to keep his promise to Keith and to himself.

"Yes," he had said, "I'll do the best I can, old boy."

He paused a moment in serious contemplation, then looked the way his friend had gone.

"Go back to them," he continued, "to *her,* and to your better self, be happy—and make them happy."

He looked about the camp reflectively, and then deliberately began pushing the embers of the fire together; he laid on a few sticks of fuel and placed the coffee pot to heat. The fire being slow he knelt and fanned it with his hat. Searching the panniers or pack bags he found some food and, more from the desire to occupy himself than to satisfy hunger, he began to prepare a meal. Soon convinced that he could not eat anything, he placed the victuals back in the panniers and began setting the camp to order. In doing this he picked up one of the pack bags and discovered that it was branded "J. K." This he examined carefully and, satisfied that he could not erase it nor transform it into his own brand, he cut out the brand, leaving a ragged irregular hole which he raveled around the edges and singed to give it the appearance of having been burned. He then picked up the other pack bag, intending to do the same with it, but found it contained no brand, whereupon he threw it down, reflected a moment, then picked it up again. Glancing around the camp he picked up a blackened stick from the camp

fire, then the frying pan and, rubbing the coal in the grease of the pan proceeded to draw "L. A." He then looked over the pack saddle for other brands or marks of identification and cut off a strap containing the JK brand and rubbed the new cut with the black coal. Next he examined the dishes. Finding some of them branded, he scraped them with a rock to deface or remove it. Picking up the Indian's saddle he carried it off and hid it in the rocks some distance away, carefully obliterating his tracks as he turned back to camp. He then set about to sweep out the tracks of Keith and the Indian. This completed, he fanned the fire under the coffee pot and poured a cup of coffee, which he sipped as he stood looking the way Keith had gone.

"It's the only way. They mustn't follow nor suspect. —It's the only way. —It's the best I can do. —There's no other way," he repeated.

As he spoke Black Behannan peered over the top of a boulder some distance back of the camp, and a little later the Mexican stood up near him. From some distance up the mountain they had spied the cattle lying about in the bottom of the canyon and figured that the camp was somewhere in the vicinity. Being naturally cowardly they were extremely desirous of avoiding any possibility of harm and hence were using every precaution to prevent discovery while endeavoring to locate the man or men they were after. Not since they had left Mexico had they had an opportunity to prove to their employer and foreman the extent they would go in their service. But, after the manner of their kind, their loyalty had its limitations and they had no notion of letting it carry them to the point of physical harm to themselves.

The overhanging cliff beneath which the camp was situated hid Ames from their view, but they had sighted the saddle horses grazing in the little green spot above the cattle. Now they could smell the smouldering fire and knew that camp could not be far away.

Cautiously they crept from rock to rock, stopping to peer in every direction before proceeding from one cover to the next. Behannan was ahead and finally reached a point where, peering over the edge of the cliff, he could see his man.

"Pst!" he signalled to the Mexican, with sudden backward wave of his hand as he stood crouching and straining in the effort to see if there might be more than the one.

Ames was squatting near the fire, fanning it with his hat to warm the content of the coffee pot, when Blackie spied him. As he filled the tin cup and stood up, his head and the upper portion of his body came into full view with his face quartering away from Behannan. The latter's surprise was clearly manifest in the suddenness with which he dropped behind a protecting rock and the look he turned to his companion.

"Que viste?" the Mexican asked quickly, noting the startled expression and action of the other.

"Him!" said Behannan, with manifest agitation, "Ames."

It was the Mexican's turn to be surprised and he, too, showed added concern, for whatever had been the depth of his hatred of Ames it had possessed the restraining element of a very wholesome fear, and the suddenness of this unexpected meeting with one whom these two men had long regarded as an enemy, for the moment rather unnerved both of them. José was the first to recognize the advantage of the present situation; he rose and started stealthily forward. As he did so Behannan caught the significance of his companion's movement and having no notion of being robbed of the satisfaction of a first shot seized José by the belt and jerked him back.

"Al diablo!" the Mexican swore through his set teeth, but both recognized the danger of any altercation.

"Both," said Blackie by way of truce. "Both together," and he emphasized with a motion indicating

that they would stand together and fire at the same time.

Accordingly they arose together and were in the act of "drawing," each with the comforting reflection that if, by reason of his agitation he should miss, the other would likely not and, thereby, lessen the probability of any uncomfortable or dangerous come-back. Just as they looked each at the other to signify readiness without attempt at advantage, something occurred that caused them to drop suddenly behind the sheltering rock before them. It was the person of Miss Geneva Price appearing suddenly on the brink of the terrace on a level with them but immediately to the left of the camp and directly behind Ames, still hid from her view by a jutting point.

"Here, Elmer, this way. Oh, do come on. Please, please hurry," she was saying commandingly.

"My God!" exclaimed Ames. "What's this? Miss Price!"

"Gee-mimeny, Sis!" the boy protested from some point farther away, "What's the matter with you? Are you crazy? You've lamed both our horses and nearly killed yerself half a dozen times already. If I didn't hold back you would," he whimpered. "How will we ever get out of here?"

"Leave the horses and come down where I did, and do hurry, or I'll leave you," commanded his sister, looking back as she spoke.

"Oh, Mr. Ames," she exclaimed almost hysterically as she turned and saw him before her. "Why did you —come? You are—not—Don't you know they are—that Blackie and the Mexican will kill—that they are here, somewhere? They came to kill whoever was with the cattle." She made a pathetic motion as though reaching for him, then stopped—trembling.

"Calm yourself, Miss Price." Ames urged. You are all worn out. Have you been lost?" He questioned, surprised at her appearance. "Where is your brother, and your horse?"

"There," she said, "up there," pointing up the face of the cliff. "We got off the trail and couldn't get the horses any farther—" she said, breathing heavily and showing great fatigue, "and I saw—I'm sure I saw them near here and—" she stopped, confused, nearly ready to cry— "and Mr. Jackson said—they would—kill—on sight."

"You must be calm, Miss Price," Ames urged. "Let me give you some coffee. There's no occasion for excitement and you are exhausted. You must have been out since very early and you must rest," and he began shaping the camp bedding for her comfort. "Here, come and lie here until the coffee warms up—and I'll go find your brother. He'll be scared, and awfully tired and hungry too."

As he spoke he started to look for the boy, when she rushed up to prevent him from going.

"No, oh, no!" she cried excitedly, taking hold of him, "not that! You must not! I tell you they're here—right near and they will—" she stopped with a chill of fear as she spied Behannan peering over the rocks.

"Oh, my *God!—Quick!"* she fairly screamed. *"Go back,* I tell you!" and she pushed him so violently that he tripped and staggered backward just as José was intent on firing. Recovering himself, Ames picked up the girl and took her to the bed, under the sheltering cliff.

"Miss Price," he said, with some force, "listen to me! You are utterly worn out and ill. You must lie still. You'll faint in a moment. You're ill and frightened. Lie still and I'll bring you some coffee."

To reach it he would again expose himself. Springing up, she seized him from behind and as he turned, threw her arms about him.

"Come back!" she screamed, "get down! My God! Can't you see they are there! Right up there, behind the rock trying to get to shoot you!"

Looking up for the first time, Ames saw the Mexican trying to get a shot at him, but prevented by the girl

being in the way. Stooping, he took the girl again in his arms and carried her back under the protecting cliff. As he did so Behannan rose from behind a rock and motioned for the Mexican to go around to the right, to a position where he could see into the camp, which direction Ames, of course, did not see.

"I understand now, Miss Price," Ames began in an effort to cover up his intentions, "and—you'll have to —that is, I'll have to take the consequences of my conduct. I'm trapped—and I deserve what's coming. They all—go that way finally—and it's right!"

It was not without some effort that Ames spoke thus. To dissemble was bad enough, but to do so to her was doubly hard. Furthermore, this was a new and unexpected call to new sacrifice. Why had she come to him thus? When he had last spoken to her she had not replied—had turned away. Had he misunderstood? or, had she merely come to save her uncle from the consequences of what he had planned?

But, he reflected, this was no time to turn back. Whatever her motive he must not stop to quibble about it now. Even if she had come solely in response to her own feeling toward him, he could not turn back. So far as he was concerned it was again the old conflict of expediency and duty; of self-interest against an obligation to others. Of course, if she were vitally concerned,—if she were acting out of—but no,—it was not his business to seek excuses for himself. He had a fleeting thought of telling her plainly that it was the path of duty and appealing for confidence in him; but he felt that was again a species of weakening; of seeking to serve self. He must insist that she leave him to his course. She seemed to be searching him intently, yet there was in her scrutiny no hint of accusation—not even of reproof.

"Miss Price," he began with as much firmness as he could command, "I shall not question your motive in what you are attempting, but I must insist that—"

"Mr. Ames," she said with firmness and decision,

"you want me to think you guilty—but—*I—know—you are not.* You're here to protect some one else and—and—" her voice caught, and tears came to her eyes, "—you *must not.* I—I want— Oh, can't you see?"

Yes, he did see now. It was—She wanted to save him, to help him for himself—no, even more than that—for *herself,* and over Lewis Ames swept a great, near-mastering fear that he might not be strong enough for this new and crucial test. After all, he was not alone to be considered. Someone else cared. *She* cared. And in the throes of the strongest appeal his life had ever known—ever could know—he prayed fervently for strength to see and to go the way of duty, to give all—even this. Already he had accepted the fact that the supreme sacrifice to duty might mean the forfeit of life itself, and had met and conquered that. Life he had consecrated to accepted duty, but here was a new and greater sacrifice transcending life itself.

"I see that you are making a great effort in my behalf and—and I—appreciate the sentiment—the motive that could actuate such splendid, such—heroic—self-sacrifice," he said. "And because I do appreciate, makes it all the more difficult to do my duty—that is, to meet the consequences of the course I have chosen to go—and—"

"Mr. Ames, listen to me, and then perhaps you'll stop dissembling and—also decide your course quite differently," she said with great earnestness. "For some time past I have been uneasy about Uncle Jay. Just a few days ago I overheard and partially witnessed a rather violent quarrel between Uncle and a man named Weems who has surreptitiously visited the ranch several times in the past and openly only recently. They quarrelled about something Uncle's men did to a nester who tried to settle somewhere on the range. They finally came to an agreement again, but Weems warned Uncle very emphatically to beware of you, stating that the nester was formerly a dear friend of yours and that you would in some way assist

and possibly avenge him unless your friendship for him were destroyed. He believed this had been done, but was not sure. Sam, the cook, seemed to be a friend and confidant of yours. Three days ago he heard very definite plans being made to capture someone in this canyon. It was supposed to be your friend who was taking the cattle to the river. Sam knew some of the details, and I knew some. Sam knew of the suspicion as to your friend and so did Elmer, who told me. You were not included in the plans for his capture. Mr. Jackson told the Mexican and Behannan to hasten on down the canyon and not bother about capturing—just—, oh, you know! Then, when you suddenly left, I was—I—just—" Again the catch in her voice, then tears, "—couldn't—stand it."

She ended the avowal in a paroxysm of sobs, paused briefly, then went on.

"Sam said he was sure you had gone to help your friend, and I just—You had been so kind—to Elmer—to us. Now—don't you—? Oh, you must—you *must not do this!* Where is your friend? Will he—? Can't you—do something?"

"And you came to—to warn—to help?" he said caressingly, in spite of himself.

"Oh, dear,—I—I just had to! I couldn't have lived—and not come to—to—help."

Behannan from the rocks above was signalling to the Mexican now, and indicating their location.

"But how did you get here? It must have nearly—"

"Oh, I stood it some way, but poor Elmer, he'd go to sleep right on his horse."

"I ought to go and find him," Ames suggested, making as if to do so. "He'll be frightened and tired and—"

"I'll tell you," she said with mingled decision and appeal—"they'll not harm me and I'm going up there and tell them that Uncle has countermanded Jackson's order and that he doesn't want you harmed. That you—that—Well, I'll make some satisfactory explana-

tion,—if you'll keep out of harm's way. Will you do that?"

While Ames had no notion of leaving it to this girl to protect him, a new light had been shed on the whole matter. He was planning to fight—for himself —for her—and the others.

"Miss Price," he said firmly, "do you know that I'd never forgive myself for sitting here—yes, hiding like a rat in a hole while you tramp these hills in an effort to rescue me?"

"But, I—want—to—do it," she assured him, looking away as she spoke with great earnestness.

"Oh, I do—want—to do it. And besides," she added, brightening, "what else is there that we can do? You know their personal enmity toward you, while they've no occasion to harm me. I'm rested some—very much —now, and I think I'll get some coffee. The fire's out and it's not improving any. Now you sit right close to that rock. If you don't I'll not take a single sip of coffee."

While she was getting her coffee Ames examined the bedding and panniers hastily and seemed to find what he sought, a grey flannel shirt. As she returned he took sugar from a bag he found in a pannier and sweetened the coffee for her.

"You've been ordering me around," he said kindly, but firmly. "Now I want you to take one command from me—and obey it. If you don't you're apt to get —shocked."

"Get shot?" she said with manifest alarm.

"Shocked—shocked!" he corrected. "I'm going to change my shirt. Now please look that way," pointing beyond her, "until—until—well, until I give you permission to do otherwise."

Assuming the request to be in connection with some strategy looking to protection or escape, she complied and Ames immediately slipped off his dark colored shirt and put on the grey one. Rolling up a small blanket he put it in the sleeves of his shirt, then

wrapped the shirt around a portion of the camp bedding and buttoned it, leaving a small portion projecting through the neck on which he placed his hat. This dummy, or effigy, he propped up between a rock and a bush. This completed, he stealthily arose, and with a look of mingled concern and affection at Miss Price he slipped quietly around the point of rocks, the way Keith and the Indian had left.

For some moments the girl sat sipping her coffee without turning her head.

"Aren't you a long time changing your shirt?" she asked finally. "You must be changing your whole wardrobe." she continued after another pause. "I want to get some more coffee."

"I'm afraid you're not playing fair," she said with some apprehension when he did not reply. "I'll give you warning that I'm going to look around. I positively *am.* One, two," she counted. "Third and *last* call—Three!"

She turned just as José fired at the dummy which she saw fall. She screamed and sprang toward it. As she did so Behannan rose from behind his rock as though to come forward to the edge of the cliff overhanging the camp. As he started cautiously forward Ames stealthily approached him from behind and struck him on the head. Seizing him as he dropped his gun, Ames hastily removed his cartridge belt, took a pistol from his boot and dropped him over a bank a little distance away and hastened back out of sight, taking all of Behannan's weapons. Miss Price, ignorant of all this, sat dazed for a moment, then her look was eager animation changing to reflection, and again to sudden resolve. She had caught the idea of the strategy and going to the effigy, caressed it. Getting a cup she pretended to give it water. Ames had heard her scream as the shot was fired and returned hastily.

"What is it, dear—Miss Price, are you hurt?" he said solicitously.

"No, no," she said startled. "Back, quick! He still

thinks it's you and I screamed to deceive him. Oh, do get back! I'll stay and continue the deception."

"Yes, yes, that's it," he said with quick appreciation. "I put *him* to sleep. Here," and he started to offer her a pistol, then changed. "No, I'll leave this here," indicating a rifle. "It's loaded, but don't take it in sight—use it if necessary," and he was gone again.

Miss Price returned to the effigy and pretended to caress it, propping it up and placing the hat in place while doing so. This completed, she again retired as though to get something; immediately there was another shot. Again she screamed representing great grief. She noted that the hat now had two holes in it.

"A dead shot, that José," she said apprehensively. "And to think—what might have—" Turning, she looked the way Ames had gone. "Oh, God in Heaven, protect him!" she prayed fervently. "But my work is here. Dear God, help me! Oh, help me—and—him!"

Forcing composure, she again took the cup and pretended to get water from a bucket and hasten with it to the effigy. She feigned all the time to be working with a wounded man and to be shielding him from the direction of the Mexican's shots.

Someone shouted a great distance away and up the canyon.

"What's that? Someone else coming," and she looked puzzled.

Again the shout.

"Yes, someone trying to find their way down," she said. "They're coming nearer."

As she spoke Elmer came to her excited, but showing drowsiness and fatigue.

"Sister, he began, "someone is—Did you hear—?" Then he saw the effigy.

"Oh, my! Is someone hurt?"

"Oh, yes, come here quick!" she cried with feigned concern.

"Who did it, sis? Who is—oh, that's only—"

"Elmer, listen to me," she commanded, speaking

forcefully, but in lowered tone. "Some men up in the rocks think this is Mr. Ames and are trying to kill him. I want them to continue to think so. Get down here and—"

"Ye—e—es, but maybe I'll—get shot!" the boy protested skeptically.

"But you *will not!* No one wants to hurt you. Come, now, here's your chance to be a hero. And help—help me very much."

Frightened, but somewhat reassured, he went to her.

"Are you sure that—"

"Yes, I'm sure no one is going to hurt you!" she said with some vexation. "Come now, right here. Kneel down here and pretend you are helping me do something for a wounded man."

As he complied Ames returned around the point partially carrying and partially dragging the Mexican. He stood a moment observing them.

"Splendid," he said finally, the very acme of admiration in tone and look.

Elmer, frightened, scrambled hastily off the way he had come, while Miss Price sprang up and started toward Ames.

"Oh, thank—" she began and started to fall against Ames as she sank down. He threw an arm about her, and she resolutely gathered her strength and composure.

"Come, dear. It's all right now," he assured her. "Just let me tie this—fellow and—"

"Is he—? Did you—?" she began.

"No. He's only taking a nap. His light's out for the time being, but to save trouble I'll just tie him, if you'll hand me that rope."

She complied and they knelt together while he tied José. She was slightly behind him and to the side, and as he worked she made as though to stroke and kiss his hair.

"There we are," he said as he finished tying. "We're all safe. I dropped Blackie over a bank into a sand

hole and if he wakes up soon he can't get out without help."

He turned just in time to see the girl collapse. The strain over, her strength and resolution could sustain her no longer.

"Why," he exclaimed, catching her. "Are you hurt? Did he—?"

"No," she said faintly with the last flicker of consciousness, "I'm just—ti—erd," and the waning voice trailed away into the merest whisper.

"Oh, you tired—tired,—little—" he made as if to kiss her but restrained the impulse, "—heroine. Ill, starved, worn out: and to come down here. How could you ever do it?"

Holding her in his arms he longed to rain kisses upon the silent, drooping face as he took her toward the bedding.

"Don't you hurt her!" exclaimed the returning boy. "That's my sis—"

He was trying to make up by braggadocio for the ignominy of his flight, but, recognizing Ames, he stopped perplexed. Ames did not heed him. The whole of his conscious self was centered in what he held in his arms.

"Kiss 'er if you want to," the boy suddenly suggested. "She won't care, I know. She's stuck—"

"Hush!"

"Well, anyhow—"

"Hush, I tell you!" Ames commanded sternly. Placing her on the bedding he began to look for food.

"Hello, down there."

The call was from some one on the ledge above them.

"Hello," Ames answered after a pause.

"How do you get down there?" the man above called again.

"I don't know. Is it Mr. Ward?" Ames inquired thinking he recognized the voice.

"Yes."

Miss Price, reviving, attempted to sit up.

"Elmer, show him where I—we came down," she directed weakly.

"Gee, sis. I don't want to come down there again!" the lad protested.

"But you can show Mr. Ward—"

"There, Miss Price," Ames directed. "Please lie quietly there until I can find you something to eat. If you'll do that, I'll—we'll find the trail for Mr. Ward."

"Oh, now I know," the boy exclaimed, as he started away. "Yes, I'll show him."

With cup and spoon Ames went to the girl.

"This is the best I can do under the circumstances," he explained. "I don't know what to call it. It's just some bread and water, sweetened. Oh, yes, I do! It's Angel Food."

Smiling faintly, she took it.

"Now, I must fix some for Elmer," he said.

"You don't mean to tell me she came down here!" Mr. Howard was saying somewhere above them. "Why, a lizard could scarcely crawl over such a place."

"Yes, she did, certainly," the boy was explaining. "She went bounding down here like a mountain sheep."

"Why, that's worse than the place where your Uncle was killed."

"Killed?" and the girl started suddenly. "Uncle Jay killed? Oh, Mr. Ames!"

"What's that you say, Ward?" said Ames concernedly, jumping up to meet Mr. Howard. "Some accident to Mr. Frye?"

"Yes, he was coming down this horrible trail up where it comes along the head of the red granite formation," that gentleman explained, "and his horse stumbled. Before one could raise a hand, rider and horse had gone over the cliff a sheer drop of eighty or a hundred feet. Some of the boys were with him in a very few minutes, but he never spoke nor breathed. They are taking him up the trail now."

"Oh, Uncle!" the girl moaned sincerely. "My uncle —to die like that!"

"There, there, girlie," said Ames with sincere desire to comfort. "You can't help it now. Your Uncle Jay died just like he lived—rugged, strong, and unafraid."

"Are there other relatives that can be reached?" Mr. Howard asked.

"No, only Elmer and I," said the weeping girl. "Aunt Louie is father's sister, though she lived with us and was largely provided for by Uncle Jay after mother died."

"Then it would seem, Miss Price, that you must assume charge of matters and we will endeavor to carry out your wishes," Mr. Howard suggested considerately.

"Yes. Thank you, Mr. Ward, very much. I must go to him at once."

"Not until you have rested some," Ames protested.

"No, no. I can't rest here. I must go at once. You must help me. Please let me go at once. Where is Elmer?"

"He went up to see about your horses," Howard stated. "He says they can't be brought here from that way. It seems you, as well as I, got off the trail."

"Call him, please, and let's go at once," the girl requested.

"You rest here," Ames suggested tenderly, "until we get your horses down here."

"The boy and I will attend to that, Mr. Ames, and you can bring her up when we are ready," volunteered Mr. Howard.

"Yes, and you can go on at once while I attend to Blackie and José."

"Oh, I had forgotten," said Miss Price. What—? Where?"

"Behannan and the Mexican! They here?" Mr. Howard asked with surprise.

"There's the Mex," said Ames pointing, "and Blackie I disarmed and dropped over the cliff on a sand-drift,

up the canyon a ways. I ought to gather them up but the question is what to do with them now that—that things are on a new turn."

"I can help you out in that respect soon, I think," Mr. Howard asserted. "Sheriff Flynn and a posse are at the river and will soon be on this side. In the meantime we must arrange to get Miss Price out of here. I'll go see how the boy is getting along with the horses."

Ames went to Miss Price as she sat quietly, weeping. Boldly now he caressed and consoled her. Their backs were to the Mexican who was surreptitiously working at the rope with which he was bound. While they were thus absorbed he quietly worked the rope off and crept stealthily away.

The comforted girl ceased her weeping in a newer consolation that she felt was near.

"You say there are no other relatives, just you and Elmer?" Ames asked.

"Not a one. Uncle Jay was mamma's only living brother and Aunt Louise is father's sister, not mother's. When mother died Uncle was away and Aunt Louie, being alone, came to our place to be with us, and Uncle, being much of the time away, continued the arrangement. And now—there's—just brother and—Aunt Louie, and—" and tears again welled her eyes.

"And me," Ames pleaded tenderly. "Won't you please count me—too?"

"Do you mean—" she began, trying to look him in the face and failing utterly.

"Yes," very affectionately, "I—mean that—that I want *you,* my darling," and he took her in his arms rapturously.

"I mean that—that I love you—*love you,*" kissing her passionately.

At this moment the Mexican, José, stealthily approached, picked up the rifle where Ames had left it, and with a look of deepest hate had raised it to fire when Keith suddenly sprang and seized him from

behind and jerked him back so that the gun was discharged harmlessly in the air. Miss Price screamed. Ames sprang and turned.

"Keith!" he exclaimed. "You here?"

"Yes—old pal," said Keith holding the Mexican's gun securely. "It was too much—to leave you that way—I couldn't do it."

CHAPTER XLIII

TWO VIEWS FROM THE RIMROCK

IT is doubtful if a more genuine all-round surprise party could have been staged by any degree of preparation than the one Keith's approach had sprung. For some minutes anything like conversation was utterly out of the question. First one and then another would start a sentence—perhaps a statement, only to turn it, half-formed, into a question. Perhaps it would be a question turned suddenly into a meaningless ejaculation. Whether true to form or merely to a hacknied assertion, the woman was the first to find expression of any semblance of a sane idea.

"Perhaps it would be safer and saner as well as relieve the tenseness of the situation if someone would start some introductions around here," she hazarded.

"Suppose we preface that by making a good job of tying up a sullen and disappointed Mexican," Ames put in. To which Keith, standing all this time holding on to the Mexican with one hand and the gun with the other, opined that such a step might be conducive to the formalities.

"I beg your pardon," and Ames blushed slightly as he said it, and walking up to the Mexican he took the sulky José by the shoulder with one hand and dexterously kicked his feet from under him so suddenly that it almost threw Keith as well.

"Perhaps you'd better do the tying this time," he went on, with a nod to Keith, at the same time reaching with his foot for a rope which he tried to draw toward him with the toe of his boot.

"I didn't make much of a job of it the last time, evidently."

"That's because I helped—or didn't," the girl smiled, as she picked up the rope and handed it to Ames. She

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stood and watched the two men intently as they bound the still sulking José.

"I'm going to see—or at least, hope—that you make a good job of it this time," she said seriously.

Finishing the job, the two men stood up together, looked gratefully into each other's eyes and silently clasped hands in the fervent depth of renewed and strengthened friendship, stronger for the strain it had undergone, and truer for the reciprocal sacrifice and service by which it was once more cemented.

Almost at the same time they turned to the girl, Keith with questioning eyes and Ames with those of gratitude and love and proud possession.

"Miss Price,—my heroine," he said to Keith with smiling nod toward the girl. And then, taking one of Keith's hands in both of his, he said simply:

"Keith, my more than friend; my brother and benefactor."

With low bowed heads to hide the tears that welled in the eyes of each, they stood in silence while Heaven's peaceful benediction seemed to melt and weld their throbbing hearts in a strong, sweet bond of friendship made everlasting by heroic sacrifice.

The recall to present actualities came from Elmer, calling from some point on the terrace where the horses had been left, to say that they were again on the trail. Ames and Keith conversed apart for a few minutes and then called to Mr. Howard. As a result of the conference it was decided that it was not practicable to get out of the canyon that night. Accordingly Keith and Howard set about to arrange the camp for the night, with especial reference to some degree of comfort for Geneva, while Ames set out to overtake and recall Quagunt from his long, arduous and unnecessary trip around under the rimrock, Ames volunteering for that service because of his better knowledge of the rugged, broken country. Keith was of the opinion that the Indian was not far away as he had left him greatly perplexed between the advisability

of carrying out the original plan, or of returning to some safe vantage point from which to view the outcome of Keith's return to the camp. Sure enough, Ames found him perched in a niche of a cliff from which, while practically out of view of the camp himself, he could watch what went on. It was with manifest relief that he heard Ames' statement of the facts and returned with him to met the others, there to keep faithful watch over Behannan and the Mexican through the ensuing night. The others relieved each other for such snatch of rest as the conditions made possible, but Quagunt would not hear of it. Whether out of fear or of loyalty, or a combination of the two, he sat the long night through with ready rifle across his lap and vigilant eye for every move of the prisoners. Though not without misgivings, he consented next morning to accompany Mr. Howard to the river with the captives which were to be turned over to the sheriff.

Ere the morning sun found its way into the devious depth of that memorable canyon the little party broke camp. Howard and the Indian, with their prisoners, went toward the river; Keith, the boy, and Ames and a betrothed young lady, taking their way up the winding trail, higher, higher and higher, like the course of the climbing sun. But the sun was on its downward course again ere they reached the top and the afternoon shadows of the massive, beetling cliffs, grotesque and sombre, lay across the gashed and jagged gorge as though to veil the picture of the place where, amid such trying scenes, each had kept firm to duty's stony path and friend had been true to friend.

As they topped the rimrock Keith, with delicate consideration, called the boy and they rode on while Ames and the girl turned for one more look down at the place where each had stood at duty's post and love had come to light the darkened way.

A moment they gazed in silence down into the darkening depths below the rimrock, then into each other's eyes. Neither said a word, but hand pressed hand as

they turned again to take the higher view, bright with a love sanctified by the sacrifice through which it had come to its fruition.

Through the branches of the tree-tops the afternoon sun sent down its bright benison, to say that though in life's morning shadows lay along the forward course, the path of steadfast duty leads at last to a time when shadows are all behind, while a glowing horizon shines on ahead—beyond which the daylight never dies.